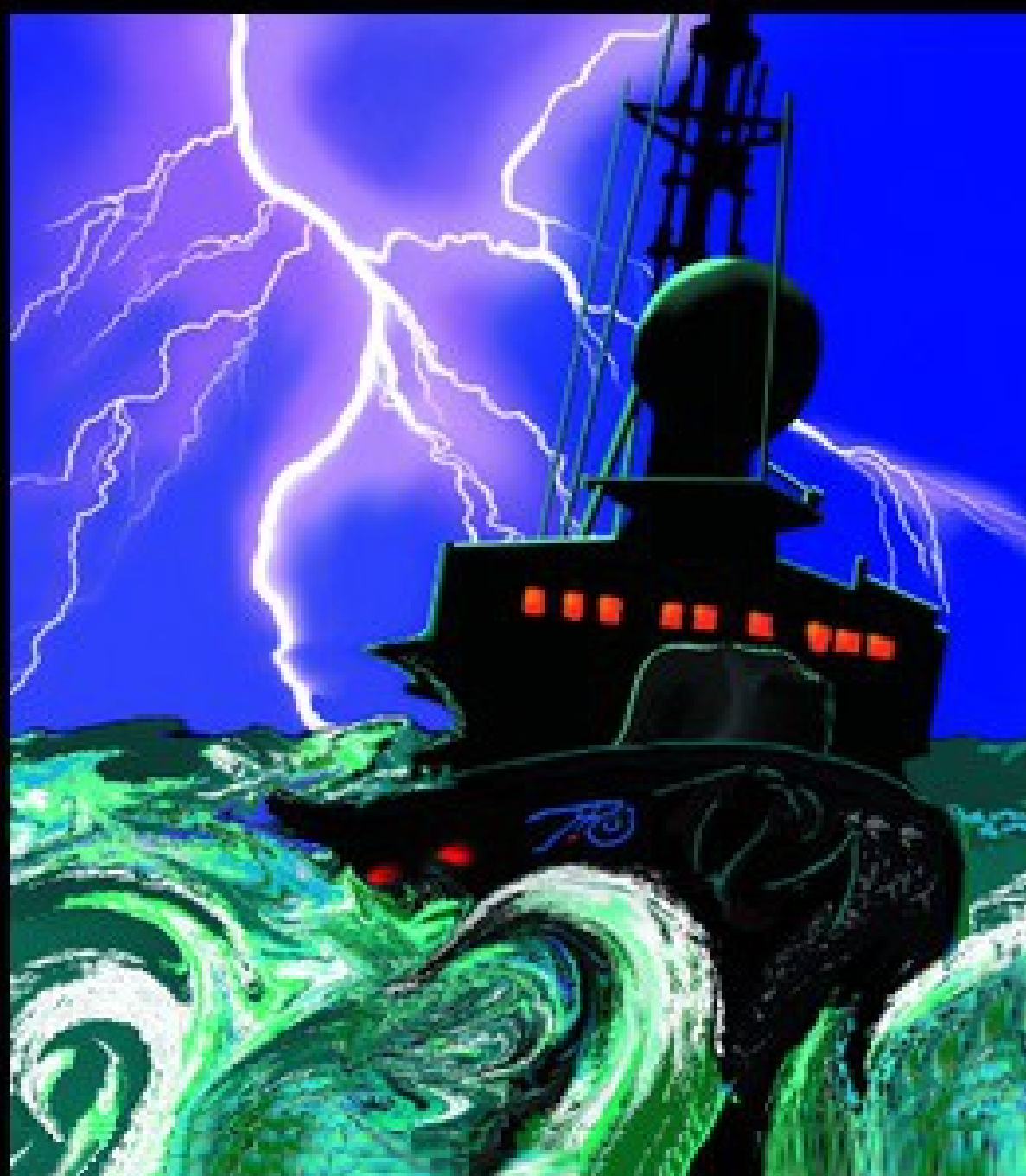


THE
INVESTIGATORS
in
THE CASE OF THE
MUTINY AT SEA





in

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Jupiter, Pete and Bob, the young detectives from Rocky Beach, look forward to a great vacation by participating in deep-sea exploration on the research vessel *Wavedancer*. Instead of getting sun burned on their bodies during a comfortable sailing trip in the Pacific Ocean, they encounter a mutiny at sea. The research vessel falls into the hands of a fanatical scientist. Under his command, the ship heads into uncharted waters.

The Three Investigators
in
The Case of the Mutiny at Sea

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Translated, adapted, and edited from:
Die drei ???: Meuterei auf hoher See
(The Three ???: Mutiny on the High Seas)

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(1998)

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(2020-02-18)

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1. A Vacation at Sea

School's out and it's the summer vacation. The Three Investigators, Jupiter Jones, Pete Crenshaw, and Bob Andrews had absolutely no idea on what they were going to do for the next two weeks. They were sitting grumpily inside an old mobile home trailer situated on the premises of The Jones Salvage Yard, which is operated by Jupiter's Uncle Titus and Aunt Mathilda.

It was in this trailer that Jupiter, Pete and Bob set up the headquarters of their detective company many years ago. In recent weeks, they have not had a case to solve, so they thought of taking a vacation somewhere.

"If we hang around here, Aunt Mathilda would have a long list of things for us to do," Jupiter remarked. "That's not how I would like to spend my vacation!"

"I want to go on vacation! Absolutely!" Pete said. "Somewhere, anywhere."

"Then we'll have to think of something," Jupiter said. "Where can we go?"

"Somewhere we could afford," Bob said.

"So it's right here in Rocky Beach then," Pete growled, dissatisfied.

"We could," Bob began, but he was interrupted by the phone ringing.

Jupiter switched on the loudspeaker connected to the phone before answering. "The Three Investigators, Jupiter Jones speaking."

"Hello, Jupiter. Bob's dad here," the voice came out of the loudspeaker. "Is Bob there?"

"Yes, I'll pass the phone over."

"Hello, Dad."

"Hi, Bob. So have you all decided what you're doing this vacation?"

"We're still racking our brains on that," Bob replied. "But we're running out of ideas."

"Well, luck is on your side," said Mr Andrews. "Actually, I'm not sure whether I would call this opportunity a vacation."

"What do you mean by that?" Bob asked as Jupiter and Pete listened on with interest.

"How would you like to spend your vacation on a ship? Two weeks on the high seas."

"On the high seas?" shouted The Three Investigators.

"That's right. As a crew on a research vessel."

"Tell us more!" Bob said with excitement.

"A colleague of mine, Carol Ford, works for television," Mr Andrews said. "She has been commissioned by her station to shoot a documentary about a research trip. Tomorrow, the research vessel *Wavedancer* is to leave to study volcanic activity and hot deep-sea springs in the Pacific. Carol will be there with her camera. But a few days ago the crew fell ill with a severe viral flu, all of a sudden."

"All at once? That's weird," Bob remarked.

Mr Andrews continued: "I guess they've all infected each other. Well, the problem is that such a research vessel is used by many different teams of people. The next team is already scheduled so this trip cannot be postponed, otherwise they would have to wait at least a year for the next opportunity. Dr Helprin, the leader of the expedition, has managed to put together a new research team. But for the regular ship's crew, he's still missing a few people—to be exact, three."

Bob laughed. "You're not saying we could..."

"Carol just called me. Because of the planned expedition, she is as concerned as the researchers because the ship will have to leave tomorrow. She asked me if I know of three people who could step in on such short notice..."

Pete tapped Bob on the shoulder. "But we're not sailors!" he hissed.

"What do you have to do on a ship like this?" Bob asked.

"I don't know," Mr Andrews replied. "She didn't say that she needed sailors or such, so probably it's nothing a layman couldn't do."

"What? Scrub the deck, cook and stuff like that?" Bob remarked.

Mr Andrews laughed. "I don't think so. But Dr Helprin and Captain Jason will tell you."

Bob frowned and looked at Pete and Jupiter questioningly. "Wait a minute—Captain Jason? Is that a coincidence?"

"Not at all, son. It's actually the same Captain Jason whom you already know."

"All right!" Jupiter shouted. "From our case on *The Secret of Shark Reef*! But I thought Jason is the captain of the *Sea Wind*."

"He used to be," replied Mr Andrews, who had heard Jupiter through the phone. "He has sold the *Sea Wind* and placed himself in the service of Ocean Obs, the environmental and research organization that owns *Wavedancer*. I'm sure Captain Jason would welcome you with open arms. After all, he already knows you. Well, boys, it's up to you to decide—would you like to spend your holidays on the high seas?"

Bob looked at his friends questioningly.

"When the sun shines and I can lie lazily on the deck," Jupe said and shrugged his shoulders. "Why not?"

"Well, it doesn't seem like a cruise, Jupe," Bob remarked.

"Cruises are boring," Pete said. "But vacation on a research ship—that sounds exciting! Well, I'm for it. Then I can finally swim and dive undisturbed without being stopped by you two all the time."

"I don't know," Bob murmured. "It doesn't sound incredibly exciting."

"It's your choice, Bob," his father said. "Either mow the lawn, go shopping for your mum—or set sail."

"Sounds like you want to get rid of me."

"I'm just offering you a vacation of a different kind. If you miss this opportunity, blame yourself. I'd go right now. When do you ever get the chance to dive miles into the depths with a submarine?"

"Submarine!" Bob shouted. "You didn't say anything about a submarine!"

"Dr Helprin wants to explore volcanic activity on the seabed," Mr Andrews recalled. "He'll have a submarine, of course."

"Now that's different!" Bob's face brightened. "Do you think we could go for a ride, Dad?"

"I don't know. Carol will be filming aboard the submarine. You can ask if you could go with her."

Bob turned again to Jupiter and Pete, who nodded enthusiastically. "And when do we go?"

"Tomorrow morning."

"Aye, sir. The Three Investigators will report for duty on *Wavedancer*!"

It was early the next morning. Jupiter randomly threw a stack of T-shirts into his travel bag. Then he wondered whether he should take fourteen pairs of socks with him for fourteen days or only seven and wash them halfway through. Finally he shrugged his shoulders and shoved all the socks from the shelf into his bag. He didn't feel like standing over a sink on vacation. Besides, the bag was big enough.

Jupiter looked at the clock. In a short time he would be going aboard a ship for two weeks—to laze around, which was especially his intention.

"Jupe!" Aunt Mathilda's voice penetrated from the ground floor up to him. "Jupe, don't forget to pack warm clothes! It can be very cold out at sea!"

"Yes, Aunt Mathilda," Jupiter moaned. That was at least the sixth time since last night that his aunt reminded him of anything. Jupiter and his friends had been away many times before and certainly had more experience packing suitcases than she did.

"Oh, and one more thing, Jupe—think of the first-aid kit I put together for you. Just don't leave it lying there like you did last time. If the windows aren't tight in your cabin, you can quickly get a sore throat. What am I talking about, maybe even pneumonia! Have you packed the scarf I bought you yet?"

Jupiter twisted his eyes. He opened the door and went to the stairs so she wouldn't have to yell. "Aunt Mathilda, it's summer! You don't need a scarf, not even at sea!"

Now Aunt Mathilda appeared at the bottom of the stairs and looked up at him. She laughed and winked at him. "Do your poor aunt a favour, Jupe. There's plenty of room in your bag, isn't there? You don't really have to wear the scarf until you need it."

Jupiter sighed. "All right. I'll bring it along." He returned to his room, picked up the brand-new scarf, looked at it indecisively for a moment and finally threw it onto the pile of socks. Then he packed everything into the bag and brought it downstairs.

"Jupe!" Aunt Mathilda cried again.

"What's the matter now? I've already packed my toothbrush!"

Aunt Mathilda sighed. "I'm gonna let you go on this adventure, but don't think I'm comfortable with it. Two weeks on the high seas! You can't even call from there!"

"Aunt Mathilda, don't spoil my fun! Otherwise, I'd feel guilty just because I'm on vacation."

"Do you really have everything you need?"

"Essentially, I have my flippers," Jupiter remarked and checked his bag. "Your sunscreen lotion is still in front of me in my travel bag, if that's what you mean."

Now Aunt Mathilda grinned. "I'm terrible, aren't I? But I'm worried. Who knows what you detectives are going to do?"

Jupiter smiled at her, shaking his head. "Oh, Aunt Mathilda. We are at sea for fourteen days, surrounded by water. What are we supposed to do?"

A car honked outside.

"There they are." Jupiter swung the bag over his shoulder and hugged his aunt to say goodbye. "Give my regards to Uncle Titus. See you in two weeks. I'd love to write you a card, but it's hardly be possible."

"Take care of yourself," Aunt Mathilda said, then Jupiter opened the door and left the house.

2. On to New Shores

It was very chilly this morning. The sun had just risen, it was still dark in most of the neighbouring houses. Mr Andrews's car was parked at The Jones Salvage Yard. Bob and Pete waved from inside. Jupiter walked up to the car, put his bag in the boot and sat at the back.

"Hi, you two. Good morning, Mr Andrews."

"Morning, Jupiter," Mr Andrews said. "Ready to go?"

"Sure. I'm good to go."

Bob's father turned the car and drove out of the salvage yard. Jupiter looked around once more. He waved to Aunt Mathilda, who was standing in the doorway waving a handkerchief. Then the house and the salvage yard slowly disappeared into the distance. The three of them were headed for Los Angeles.

The journey lasted only twenty minutes. After crossing Santa Monica, they reached the small coastal town of Venice. "How quiet it can be on the streets," Pete said and yawned. "But no wonder. Normally, I'd be in bed at this hour, too."

"We're here!" Bob cried and pointed right. A little below the road was the Marina del Rey harbour, one of the many small marinas around Los Angeles. The masts of countless sailing boats rocked slightly back and forth. Between them were some motor-powered sports boats. Here and there the majestic bow of a luxury yacht stood out. The three soon gave up looking for *Wavedancer* in this swarm.

Mr Andrews turned off the main road and stopped not far from the harbour basin. Jupiter, Pete and Bob took their luggage out of the boot and walked along the long pier.

"There it is," said Mr Andrews, pointing to a small ship moored at the end of the pier. It was barely larger than one of the yachts, but it made a sleek impression.

Marina del Rey was almost empty of people so early in the morning, only on *Wavedancer* were there hustle and bustle. Half a dozen men hurried up and down the wooden gangplank that connected the ship to the pier. They brought on boxes and complicated-looking equipment that they unloaded from a truck. Among them was a man whom the three had not seen for a long time, but whom they recognized immediately.

"Captain Jason!" Bob shouted and waved. "Good morning!"

The tanned, bearded man with the weather-beaten face looked up and smiled. "Bob, Pete and Jupiter! Good to see you again!"

"We think so too," Jupiter said, reaching out his hand to the captain as they reached the ship.

"So you three want to be part of this trip under my command," Jason said. "Have you thought about that well? I'm a strict captain!" He winked at the smiling boys. "Seriously, there won't be much for you to do, though I desperately need you on board."

"What do you mean by that?" Pete asked.

"The expedition is financed by Ocean Obs, a state-owned company. And that is why there are certain regulations. For *Wavedancer*, a minimum crew of eight men is required, including the scientific team consisting of three people.

"Strictly speaking, we could set off with what we have, but without the minimum crew we wouldn't have gotten a permit to sail. Since most of the crew got sick, I urgently needed a

replacement. I also had to take care of a thousand other things, but happily Miss Ford promised to find three travel companions.” Captain Jason smiled. “I was pretty surprised yesterday when she gave me your names.”

”So were we when we heard who the captain of the ship was,” Jupiter said. “When are we leaving?”

“In half an hour, so that we don’t get into the morning crowd when all the *nouveaux riches* leave with their sailing boats. But for us to do that, I have to get back to work. We’ll have plenty of time to talk later.” Captain Jason turned away and continued to help load the ship.

“Traffic jam in the harbour basin,” Pete muttered shaking his head. “Unbelievable. What do you say we get on board? I’m looking forward to our cabins.”

“Wait, there comes Carol,” said Mr Andrews, waving to a young woman who had just come down the gangplank. She was about in her early thirties, had shoulder-length blond hair and a friendly face.

“Hello, Mel.”

“Good morning, Carol. Already have the travel bug?”

“Travel bug? It’s work for me, don’t forget. Just dragging all the equipment was stress alone.” Smiling, she turned to the three boys. “So you’re the famous three detectives.”

“I don’t know if we’re that famous,” Jupiter replied embarrassedly.

“Of course you are. Anyway, I’ve read about you in the papers before. I even know you from photos. You’re Jupiter, right?” She pointed to the First Investigator.

“Then you must be Pete, because I can immediately see Bob’s family resemblance.”

Bob looked at his father frowning. “Do you think so?”

She laughed. “Why don’t you show me one of your famous business cards?”

“Oh, no,” shouted Mr Andrews, holding his hand before his eyes, protecting himself. “Don’t ask them for that, Carol. Whenever the three of them get their cards out, it is the beginning of a disaster that usually ends with another newspaper article. It’s an unwritten law, so to speak.”

“All the better,” Carol Ford thought. “I want to be a part of it.” She stretched out her hand demandingly.

Jupiter pulled a card out of his wallet and handed it to her. “Here you go, Miss Ford.”

“Just call me Carol,” she said as she took the card and had a good look at it. It said:



“This looks very professional. If I ever need detectives, I’ll know who to contact.”

“Always at your service,” joked Pete, who immediately liked the young woman.

“Well, friends, let’s get to it!” Captain Jason shouted. “The crates over there must be brought below the deck!”

The Three Investigators helped out until the rest of the cargo was on board. Then Jason shouted, “Let’s go, we’re going to sea!”

“All right, you three take care. Have fun on the ship,” Mr Andrews shouted to the three boys who were standing at the railing.

“We will! See you in two weeks!” Bob shouted back.

A few minutes later the gangplank was pulled in, the lines were released and *Wavedancer* left the harbour with minimal effort. A short while later, the ship went full speed. They stood at the stern and saw Marina del Rey slowly getting smaller. The further out they went, the better they could see the coast of Los Angeles and the city behind it with its skyscrapers. Jupiter, Pete and Bob enjoyed the fresh sea air blowing around their noses and the steady chugging of the ship’s engines.

After about an hour the mainland was no more than a hazy strip on the horizon. Before them lay the endless expanse of the Pacific.

3. Aboard *Wavedancer*

"I'll sleep upstairs!" Pete shouted and threw his bag on the top bunk of the double-decker bed.

"If it's fun for you. Then at least I won't have to climb up and down the ladder all the time," Jupe replied and looked around the cabin. It was tiny and only equipped with two bunk beds, and a wardrobe built into a wall. With a small table and three chairs, the cabin was left with very little space.

"Very exciting," Jupe said sarcastically and looked out through the small porthole. An even wave spread in front of him. The sky, which was still cloudless at sunrise, had covered a little. "Just like the view. Oh, boy. Maybe it wasn't so wise after all to embark on this journey. We'll be locked up on this ship for two weeks. When I look around here, it looks like total boredom."

"That's nonsense," Pete disagreed. "Come on, you two, let's take a look at the rest of the ship and the sub." The Second Investigator left the cabin and climbed the narrow stairs up to the deck.

In the meantime it had become quite windy. The coast was no longer visible, there was only water on all sides. Pete shivered. "Good thing my mother warned me for hours to bring at least two thick sweaters. I think I actually need them." They went towards the stern of the ship.

At the stern was the Deep Submergence Vehicle, otherwise known as the submarine. It was anchored to the ship with chains and it essentially looked like a yellow egg on two runners. At the top was a hatch for entry into the sub. There was a transparent viewing dome through which one could see into the interior of the sub. At the back was the propeller and rudder. On the sides there were some fragile looking robotic arms, which could be controlled from the inside. The name *Deep Quest* was written in black on the yellow outer hull. The submarine could be lifted into the water with a crane that was mounted on deck.

"That thing's pretty tiny," Pete remarked. "There's only room for three people."

"Exactly three." They turned around. A man had approached them unnoticed. He had short grey hair and bright eyes and wore a dark blue parka. "I am Dr Helprin," he said, reaching out his hand to them. "And you're the last minute replacements?"

"Right," Jupiter replied and introduced himself and his friends. "Actually, we have no idea about seafaring."

"It doesn't matter. You won't have much to do either. I hope you don't get bored aboard this ship."

"I was just thinking about that. But now that I see this submarine... Is it possible that we could go for a ride sometime?"

Dr Helprin smiled. "When we reach our destination, we'll be busy diving to the bottom of the ocean for nearly a week. But I think there'll be room for you sometime."

"Great!" Pete was happy. "What exactly do you want to investigate?"

"The hydrothermal vents on the East Pacific Rise," Dr Helprin said.

Pete swallowed. "Hydro-what?"

“Hydrothermal vents,” laughed Dr Helprin. “Hydrothermal vents are hot springs on the ocean floor. They are often associated with undersea volcanoes. In some places in the Pacific you can even see volcanic eruptions.”

“Volcanoes under water? That’s crazy,” Pete found. “But isn’t that pretty dangerous with a submarine like this?”

“Yes, it is. But we don’t want to look at lava flows, only at the hot springs. In these places, water is heated by much lower magma and gushes from chimneys into the ocean. The water will look all black. That comes from the many minerals dissolved in it.”

“What’s so special about it?” Jupiter asked curiously.

“The springs are at a depth of over a thousand metres,” Dr Helprin continued. “It had been assumed for decades that life is no longer possible so far down because there is no light and it is much too cold. But hydrothermal vents warm up the water and living things have actually been found there, even at greater depths. Various substances from the earth’s interior, which are discharged together with the water, serve as a food base for bacteria. Other organisms in turn feed on these bacteria. Examples of such organisms are certain types of jellyfish, tube worms or mussels that are found nowhere else in the world.”

“Aha. And you hope to find more life-forms,” Bob surmised.

“Exactly. Some of these sources have already been investigated, but that does not mean that the organisms that settle there must always be the same. A few months ago, a research vessel with a heat sensor discovered an area in the East Pacific Rise where there are hydrothermal vents. I have been studying this phenomenon for years and I finally managed to get Ocean Obs to finance an expedition to investigate this area first.

“Unfortunately, the whole project has not been under a good star so far.” He rubbed his chin. “A few days ago, when the whole crew, including two members of the scientific team, became ill, I thought we could forget the whole thing. Luckily, it still worked.” Dr Helprin rubbed his eyes and slowly let his hand slide down his face. He suddenly seemed very tired.

“You don’t look that happy,” Jupiter remarked.

Dr Helprin walked slowly towards the submarine and stroked absent-mindedly over the smooth outer hull as he continued speaking.

“That’s right. I’m not sure that I can keep to the schedule. Ocean Obs sent me a replacement, Professor Clark, but he doesn’t seem to be the right man for it.”

“What do you mean, he doesn’t seem like the right man?” Jupiter asked.

He looked at the three with a worried face, but then he shook his head. “Nothing special. Maybe I’m wrong.” The last words he had murmured almost inaudibly.

“If there’s anything we can do to help, let us know,” Bob offered. “We have no idea what you’re doing, but maybe you need some helping hands.”

Dr Helprin nodded with a smile. “We will now set up and adjust some measuring instruments. If you want, you can watch. On this occasion I can tell you something about the mission and explain the equipment. Maybe you’ll actually help me when we get to the destination in three days.”

Jupiter nodded enthusiastically. As always, he was dying to absorb new knowledge. Even though he feared he already knew half of what Dr Helprin would explain to them. But then there was still the possibility to impress him and the whole crew. Jupiter sensed one of his beloved appearances as Mr Know-It-All and looked at his two friends questioningly.

“Sure, why not,” Bob said and Pete nodded.

The Three Investigators accompanied Dr Helprin as he went below the deck, into the laboratory of which all the boxes that had been brought on board this morning were stacked.

Helprin's team members were unpacking them and carefully setting up the technical equipment.

In one corner, Carol Ford stood with a small video camera on her shoulder and filmed the action.

"Hello, boys. You see, I told you, this trip is work for me." She held the camera to The Three Investigators.

Jupiter jokingly raised his hand in front of his face. "No, no cameras, no cameras!"

"Why, you have experience with spotlights," said Pete, alluding to Jupiter's former career as a child star on television. Jupiter pushed him in the ribs. He hated to be reminded about it, especially in the presence of strangers who knew nothing about his former acting career. But before Carol could get into it, her attention was distracted.

"Have you lost your mind? What are you doing?" Dr Helprin yelled at the small, thin man who was working on one of the equipment. "This thing will blow up in our face if you plug it in like this!"

"I'm sorry. I didn't know that," the man confessed. He pushed his tiny nickel glasses up his snub nose and looked at Dr Helprin guiltily.

"I can see that. Have you ever worked with these devices?" Dr Helprin asked.

"At my former institute, we had... quite old-fashioned equipment."

Dr Helprin took a deep breath once. "I don't want to offend you, Professor Clark. But why did Ocean Obs assign you to me? What's your speciality?"

"I am a marine biologist like you, Dr Helprin," the professor replied a little more confidently. "I know what this mission is about. My speciality doesn't matter." He turned away and connected some cables to a measuring device swarmed with buttons and knobs.

Dr Helprin shook his head and observed the professor's work suspiciously until he finally devoted his attention to a computer monitor. The Three Investigators and Carol exchanged glances.

They spent most of the day in the bridge watching the setup of the measuring instruments, computers and monitors, while Dr Helprin explained how they worked from time to time. They also got to know the last two crew members—Mr Serra and Mr Evans.

Enrique Serra vividly explained all the ship's own equipment to the two scientists and helped them with the installation. He was also responsible for the engine room and was an excellent cook. He asked the three detectives to call him by his first name and promised them an excellent paella for the evening, based on the recipe of his European aunt, Gabriela.

Mr Evans, who seemed a little grumpy about the three, soon said goodbye. He was assigned to the night watch and therefore had to sleep during the day.

Captain Jason was on the bridge above them and occasionally took a look down the stairs to see how the work was progressing.

"My goodness!" Jupiter yawned as they sat in their cabin after what was indeed a delicious dinner. "We've been standing around all day looking at all kinds of equipment, but I'm still dog-tired."

"I don't feel any different," Bob groaned. "I'm sure that's what the sea air does. And tomorrow, the full programme continues immediately. All the measuring devices will be tested."

"And the day after tomorrow the submarine will be checked," Pete added. "That's what I look forward to the most. I want to go for a ride!"

"To be honest, I'm surprised," Jupe said. "I thought wild horses couldn't drag you into a thing like that."

"Why's that?"

“Well, think about it—*Deep Quest* is tiny—at least compared to the huge ocean. And it is at the mercy of the waves and the water pressure. Not to mention the countless whales that could accidentally use their tail fins to whack the submarine to the eternal hunting grounds. Or the sharks, for whom such a submarine probably looks like a sardine can to them. They only have to crack the hard shell to get to the delicious meat filling. And think only of the unimaginable pressure that prevails under water. If the shell of *Deep Quest* has even the slightest bump, it will be squashed together at a depth of a thousand metres, just like the aforementioned fish can.” Jupiter grinned demoniacally.

“Stop it, Jupe,” Pete replied and laughed his way through. “You don’t scare me—zero chance. I’m a good diver, don’t forget that.”

“That won’t do you any good at a thousand metres. Or two thousand. Or five thousand.” The First Investigator was still grinning.

“Give it up, Jupe. I’m going to bed now,” Pete said.

“To the bunk is what he means,” Bob reminded him. “So do I. Good night, fellas!”

Bob and Jupiter had been sleeping soundly for a long time while Pete was still awake. He’s been trying to fall asleep for a long time. He was terribly tired, but the words of the First Investigator did not go out of his head.

Jupiter was an idiot. He knew perfectly well that Pete wasn’t very crisis-proof. Why did he have to tell him, of all people, his horror vision? But it wasn’t just the thoughts about the sub that kept Pete awake. Only now did he really realize where he was—on a small ship in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, miles away from the nearest coast. Under him were about two miles of water on which *Wavedancer* floundered. A big wave, a leak or the attack of a whale would sink the ship immediately and Pete would be lost hopelessly.

The Second Investigator paid attention to the even rattling of the engine, the rough sea, and the creaking and groaning around him. The sea was pretty calm. There wouldn’t be any giant waves or leaks, and there wouldn’t be a whale.

Still, he couldn’t fall asleep. He pressed the little light on his watch. He’d been awake for over two hours now. Finally he pulled the blanket back and climbed out of his bed—his bunk. Silently he put on his tracksuit, slipped into his sneakers and left the cabin. The door squeaked when it opened. Pete took a quick look at Jupiter and Bob. They both slept quietly.

He thought that a little walk could make him tired. In addition, he could then convince himself that everything was fine with the ship and that there was no reason to worry.

He went up the stairs to the stern of the ship. Cold winds immediately struck him. A light drizzle had made the ground slippery. Impenetrable darkness surrounded him. Only the bridge was lit up. Mr Evans was sitting there bent over something and seemed to be working.

Pete went to the bow of the ship and saw the darkness. Since the sky was cloudy and neither the moon nor the stars were shining, He could only see as far as the sparse light of the bridge. A few metres below him, the waves were crashing against the bow. At first the darkness and the monotonous noise of the sea intensified Pete’s fear, but then he realized that it had something calming about it.

The Second Investigator looked out into the night for a few minutes, until it became too cold for him. He turned round and headed back towards the stern. As Pete circled the stern superstructure, he almost slipped on the damp floor.

Suddenly, Pete saw a dark figure standing beside *Deep Quest*. The figure seemed to be doing something to the submarine. The Second Investigator couldn’t tell who it was in the dark.

“You scared me!” Pete cried.

The figure looked up, turned around and ran away.

“Hey!” Pete shouted. “What?”

But the figure had already disappeared around the corner. The Second Investigator started the pursuit. The fugitive couldn’t get far on the ship. But when he circled the submarine, no one was seen. Slowly Pete went on and listened. Apart from the rattling of the engine and the sound of the waves there was nothing else. Then he had a thought—probably the stranger had hoped that Pete would go back down the stairs and then he would run off across the deck unseen. So the Second Investigator turned back, but he wouldn’t let the stairs out of his sight.

Suddenly Pete heard a loud splash. It sounded as if something large had fallen into the water—or someone had jumped overboard. The sound came from the other side of the ship. Pete ran off, reached the starboard side and bent over the railing. There was something floating in the water. Before Pete could see it exactly, it disappeared into the darkness.

Then someone grabbed his legs. Before he could turn around or even make a sound, he was lifted over the railing and thrown into the ocean!

4. Pete Overboard

When he splashed into the water, the cold robbed him of his senses for a moment. His tracksuit immediately sucked him full and pulled him down. Only after a few seconds did he find his bearings again and struggled his way back to the surface. At that moment, the stern of the ship was rushing past him.

“Help!” Pete screamed and had to cough. “Help!” He wanted to swim behind the ship, but his clothes hung on him like lead. He quickly took off his jacket and shoes. Then he swam as fast as he could. With every breath he took, he took a look at the ship. The distance grew faster and faster. Pete screamed with all his might.

Someone had to hear him before it was too late. He kept swimming resolutely. He had to keep up with *Wavedancer*!

But it was hopeless. The ship was much too fast, the engine noise became quieter. And the light on the bridge was only a bright spot in the darkness.

“No,” Pete puffed out panting as he desperately watched the ship move further and further away. He was lost. The cold of the water had already paralyzed his limbs. One last time Pete took a sprint, but after a few metres he gave up. It was no use.

He could never catch up with the ship, not even a world champion swimmer would have had the slightest chance.

Pete cursed himself for even going on deck. Then he cursed Jupiter, whose horror stories had not let him sleep. Then he cursed Bob, whose father had taken them to that damn ship.

And then the ship’s engines went silent. The Second Investigator looked up. Someone had turned off the engines, the ship was slowing down noticeably.

Pete immediately activated his energy reserves and kept swimming. He had to reach *Wavedancer* before it continued on. He had to!

Suddenly a spotlight lit up. The bright cone of light slid over the water and systematically scanned the surface.

“Here!” Pete shouted. “Over here!” The glistening light caught and dazzled him. Pete waved like crazy. “Help!”

“Who’s there?” shouted a voice.

“Does it matter?” he yelled angrily. “It’s me, Pete!” He kept swimming. The ship had stopped in the meantime.

When the Second Investigator had almost reached it, something dropped into the water next to him. It was a ring buoy with a rope was attached to it. He clung to the ring and was pulled to the ship’s hull. A rope ladder was unrolled down and Pete gripped it. When he pulled himself out of the water, his body was lead heavy. He was so cold and exhausted that he could hardly hold on, let alone climb up.

But that wasn’t necessary either. The ladder was pulled up until Pete reached the railing. Strong hands grabbed him and dragged him on deck. When he finally felt firm ground under his feet, his legs gave way and he squatted down exhausted. His whole body was trembling.

“You can’t stay out here, you’re freezing to death. Come with me to the bridge!”

Now Pete looked his rescuer in the face for the first time. “Mr Evans? Thank you for—” His voice failed.

Mr Evans pulled him back on his feet and took him to the bridge. With his help Pete made it up the stairs. On the bridge, a pleasant warmth struck him and he let himself fall onto a chair. Mr Evans handed him towels and a blanket, which he wrapped tightly around his body after drying off. Only after he had pressed a cup of hot tea into Pete's hand did he ask: "What happened?" He looked very serious.

"Someone pushed me overboard," Pete replied with a trembling voice and drank a sip of the hot drink.

"Pushed overboard?" Evans shouted in surprise. "Who? And why?"

"I don't know." Pete reported from the beginning what had happened. Mr Evans couldn't believe his ears.

When the Second Investigator was finished, Evans said: "I felt like I heard something. So I got up and walked out. Then I heard your cries for help. At first, I thought I was tired and hallucinating. But then you called for help again. It took me a while to get back up there and stop the ship. Fortunately, I found you with that searchlight."

"And you didn't see anyone else?"

"No."

"Thank goodness you heard the splash. After all, it's not exactly very quiet on the ship."

"I've been sailing for years," Evans explained. "At some point you learn to distinguish the sound of the sea and the engine from the rest. How are you now?"

"I'm still cold," Pete sniffed. "I gotta get out of these wet things."

"Can you make it down alone?"

He nodded. "Yeah, yeah, I'm fine."

"Good. I'll wake Captain Jason. Whoever pushed you overboard must still be on the ship."

"No!" Pete said quickly. "Don't wake him."

Mr Evans frowned. "Why not?"

"Well," Pete began hesitantly. "What do we do if it was Captain Jason himself?"

"Captain Jason? You can't be serious!"

"It's not just that either," Pete replied with a smile. "But if the captain informs the crew, we may never find out why the stranger tampered with the sub."

"Tampered with the sub?"

"Of course. I got in his way and he wanted to get rid of me. But I think we have a better chance of finding out who it was if the whole crew doesn't know what happened tonight. We'll pretend nothing has happened. Maybe we can investigate who did this."

"Investigate? It sounds like you're with the police."

"Not quite." Pete told the surprised Mr Evans about their detective business.

At first his counterpart was sceptical, but finally he believed him. "All right," Mr Evans murmured. "I'm not enthusiastic about the idea of keeping this a secret, but what you're saying sounds reasonable."

"Will you promise to keep your eyes open?"

"Of course. After all, you almost got yourself killed."

Pete got up. "I'm going down now. Thank you again." He wished Mr Evans a quiet night, then he went below.

5. The List of Suspects

When Pete entered the cabin, he quickly put on dry clothes. Then he turned on the light and woke Jupiter and Bob.

“What’s the matter?” murmured the First Investigator. “Let me sleep.”

“I nearly drowned, that’s what’s going on,” Pete replied indignantly. “Come on, wake up! This is an emergency!”

“Drowned?” Bob reported. “No kidding?”

“No kidding. Now wake up, you snorers!”

Jupiter swung his legs out of bed, straightened up and bumped his head against the bed frame above him. “Ouch!”

“At least now you’re fit,” Pete replied. “Hold on tight. I have an incredible story for you.”

Pete told them what had happened. His report did not fail to have the desired effect—Bob and Jupiter were suddenly wide awake.

“That’s incredible!” Bob shouted.

“Shh!” hissed Pete. “Do you want to wake the whole ship?”

“That’s incredible!” Bob repeated in a whisper.

“That’s not incredible, it’s a murder attempt,” Pete replied.

“My goodness, you’re lucky,” Jupe said. “We almost got rid of our Second Investigator.”

“I don’t think it’s funny,” Pete replied irritably. “I’m really scared. There’s a spy, a saboteur, a mole, whatever. And I almost fell victim to him.”

“Anyway, it was very appropriate of you to stop Mr Evans from telling Captain Jason,” Jupiter said. “This way we can investigate much better.”

“It could be very simple,” Bob said. “Whoever makes a surprised face at breakfast tomorrow when he sees Pete is the culprit.”

The Second Investigator laughed bitterly. “Unless he saw me being rescued, as the ship stopped.”

“You’re right about that, though,” Bob said.

“So it’s not made that easy for us,” Jupiter murmured and pinched his lower lip.

“Tomorrow morning, we’ll start by examining the submarine. Maybe we can figure out what the perpetrator had in mind. Until then, we can think about who comes into question.”

Pete sighed. “Let’s go through them all one by one. You two didn’t do it. And neither did Captain Jason, I’m pretty sure of that.”

Bob nodded. “He knows us. He would never endanger your life.”

“Could you tell if it was a man or a woman?” Jupiter asked.

“A woman?” Pete replied. “The only woman on board is Carol and she’s out as well.”

“You didn’t answer my question,” Jupe said.

“No, for goodness sake,” Pete replied angrily. “Of course I couldn’t see it, it was totally dark after all. Besides, if I had known, I would have told you by now.”

“And why do you think Carol’s out?” Jupiter asked. “We’ve only known her since this morning.”

Pete sighed. "If Carol wanted to get rid of one of us, she wouldn't have proposed us as a replacement."

"Maybe she suggested us because she thought that three guys could get in her way the least," Jupiter suspected. "Whatever."

"No, Jupe," Bob said. "My father's known Carol for years. I don't think she has anything criminal in mind."

"That doesn't convince me," the First Investigator insisted. "But first, let's think about the others."

"Mr Evans is logically out, too," Pete said.

"Why is that logical?" Jupe asked.

Pete twisted his eyes. "He saved me, Jupe, remember? I told you five minutes ago."

"That doesn't prove anything," Jupe said.

"Besides, he was on the bridge the whole time," Pete remarked.

"Really all the time?" Jupiter followed up. "Wouldn't it have been possible for him to sneak down while you weren't looking up?"

The Second Investigator sighed. "Maybe so. But I don't believe it. That wouldn't make any sense to me."

"That leaves Dr Helprin, Enrique Serra and Professor Clark," Bob concluded. "Enrique is actually way too nice and he can cook way too well to be the perpetrator. I know what you're trying to say, Jupe—nowhere is it written that criminals can't cook well. Still, I don't believe it."

"But he remains a suspect," Jupe said. "Just like Dr Helprin."

"What motive would Dr Helprin have?" Pete threw in. "If I'd actually drowned, the trip would have been cancelled immediately. He would never have risked that, as important as his work is to him."

"Maybe this expedition is just a cover for something else," Jupiter thought. "Dr Helprin could have been cooking this up for us."

"Could. Theoretically, it could have been anyone," Bob said. "In such a case, one should trust one's knowledge of human nature. And it tells me that Professor Clark is our prime suspect. He's been acting so strange this afternoon. He was so quiet and... well, kind of weird. Do you remember the short argument between him and Dr Helprin?"

"That's right," Pete said. "Besides, the professor is the one we know the least. I agree with you, Bob, there's something wrong with this guy."

"Of course, this theory lacks any criminological basis," Jupiter reminded his friends grimly.

"This theory is based on my knowledge of human nature and my feelings," Bob replied. "And since we don't have any solid evidence yet, we have no choice but to trust it."

"All right," Jupiter said. "But we should still keep an eye on all the other options."

Pete let himself fall back exhausted. "Anyway, I advise you to stay away from the railing in the next few days. It can be life-threatening to get too close. By the way, I am now missing a jacket and a pair of shoes. They should still be on their way to the bottom of the sea."

"A grossly negligent act of pollution," Bob said with a grin. "Your sweat-soaked sneakers will certainly condemn a fish to death."

"Very funny." Pete turned to the First Investigator. "Well, Jupe, are you still thinking about our suspects?"

"Right now, I'm thinking more about the motive. What did he want on the submarine? Was he looking for something? Or was it an act of sabotage? And was he able to complete his work?"

"It didn't look like it," Pete said. "Whatever he did, I interrupted him."

"That means he'll try again," Jupiter said.

"Then we'll keep our eyes open," Pete said. "But we can worry about that tomorrow, can't we? I'm exhausted to death."

"Maybe that's exactly what he's speculating on—that we won't be vigilant until tomorrow. If I wanted to commit an act of sabotage and was interrupted in the process, I would make the second attempt at a time when no one expected it to happen—that is, on the same night."

"You mean he strikes again?" Bob cried. "Like right now?"

"If he's smart, yes," Jupe said.

"But I'm sure Mr Evans will be vigilant," Pete said.

"Maybe. But Mr Evans can't see *Deep Quest* from the bridge because the superstructure is in between," Jupiter thought.

"What are you proposing?" Bob asked. "Shall we lie in wait?"

The First Investigator didn't get a chance to answer. He raised his hand as a warning. Now the other two heard it too—there was something creaking outside and it wasn't the normal creaking of the ship.

Somebody crept across the corridor!

"There's someone!" Pete whispered. "Shall we sneak out?"

Jupiter shook his head. "Our door squeaks! You'd hear that right away. We'll surprise him!"

He rose quietly, put his hand on the knob and held his ear to the door. When he heard the steps go past, he swung open the door very quickly and pounced out.

Carol Ford flinched and gave a little yell. She clawed her fingers into the collar of her striped men's pyjamas. "Are you crazy to scare me like that?"

"And you?" Jupiter asked briskly. "Why are you sneaking through the ship in the middle of the night?"

She grinned. "I'm about to break in. But you clever detectives have caught me, I'm afraid."

"Burglary?" Bob asked irritably.

"Yes. In the galley. I already digested the paella and woke up from hunger. Bad habit—I always have to have a small supper."

Bob sighed with relief and grinned. "Don't let Enrique catch you."

"Don't worry. Can I get you anything?"

"Thanks, but it's not necessary," Bob answered.

"All right. Don't tell the captain! Good night!" She continued her journey quietly.

"Night!" Jupiter closed the door and breathed a sigh of relief.

"I guess we can cross Carol off our list of suspects," Bob said.

"Why? Just because she claims to be on her way to the kitchen?" Jupiter questioned.

"Because she was wearing pyjamas," Bob said. "She wouldn't go on deck with that."

"That could be a cover, too," Jupiter thought. "So she'll have an excuse ready when she gets caught—just like that. Haven't you noticed anything? She didn't even ask why we're still awake and sneaked on her like that. Don't you think it's funny?"

"I think you're exaggerating your suspicion a little, Jupe," Pete whined.

"I just want to keep you from jumping to conclusions and from excluding people from the circle of suspects who don't have alibis yet," Jupe explained. "We must remain vigilant. Things are definitely not right aboard *Wavedancer*."

Jupe tiredly rubbed his hair. “And I told Aunt Mathilda that nothing could happen aboard a ship.”

6. Before the Storm

When The Three Investigators entered the galley the next morning, only Captain Jason and Enrique were sitting at the table eating bread and scrambled eggs. The three sat down and started breakfast. They observed Enrique closely, but could not detect any unusual reaction.

“Well, you three, did you make it through the first night on board? You don’t look very well rested,” Jason remarked.

“During the day, we didn’t really feel the ship rocking,” Pete said. “But if we lie there quietly at night, we get a little dizzy. It took us a while to fall asleep.”

The captain laughed. “You’ll get used to it real quick. Tomorrow you won’t even know you’re on a ship.”

Then suddenly he got serious. “But before we talk about tomorrow, I just got a message from Ocean Obs via radio. Later today, we’re going straight into a storm front. I didn’t expect that, because the sea off the west coast of Central America is known to be very calm. But this time it might be an exception.”

Pete got queasy. “Can *Wavedancer* withstand such a storm?”

“Yes, of course, Pete. After all, *Wavedancer* have sailed in a large part of the world’s oceans. But it’s gonna be a little uncomfortable. The storm area’s not large, we should be able to navigate through it in a day. It is still possible that the wind would have died down by the time we reach the area.” Captain Jason’s words became less persuasive as he spoke.

“Where are the others?” asked Jupiter, who didn’t want to hear any more about this unpleasant topic.

“Dr Helprin is monitoring at the bridge, Evans is asleep and Miss Ford and Professor Clark haven’t shown up yet. But as for Clark, I’ve been warned before that he seems to have his own rhythm. A strange man.” Captain Jason shook his head and continued eating.

The three of them took short glances at each other. Everybody was thinking the same thing—maybe the professor wasn’t here yet because he had had as short a night as the three friends.

They were almost finished with breakfast when the door opened and a lively Carol Ford entered the galley. “Good morning! What did I just hear from Dr Helprin that there’s a storm coming?”

“Looks like it, yeah,” the captain said. “We’ll probably have to change our schedule a little bit. Actually, today’s schedule would be the tests for the measuring instruments, and tomorrow would be the submarine checks. In view of the storm front, we may have to discuss with Dr Helprin to delay the two activities. We’ll wait and see how the weather develops.”

Jupiter looked briefly over to his friends and then turned back to the captain and said: “We were about to take a closer look at the submarine. We didn’t get around to that yesterday.”

“Sure, if you’re careful,” Jason replied.

But then Enrique shouted: “Tough luck, you three! It’s just starting to rain.” He pointed to the porthole. Thick drops of water clapped against it. The waves were much higher than the day before.

“Then we’d better leave right now,” Jupiter said quickly and rose. “Before things get any worse. Come on, fellas!” They left the room and went to the deck. The wind was blowing cold rain against them.

They reached *Deep Quest*, which groaned in its anchors, and took a closer look at the submarine.

“Here it was,” Pete said, pointing to the back of the submarine. “This was where the man stood, fumbling around with something.”

“Hmm. Here’s a screwed-on flap,” Jupiter said. “The problem is that we can’t ask anyone what’s behind it without perhaps drawing the wrong person’s attention.”

“No one but Mr Evans,” Bob added. “He knows all about it. But we’ll have to wait until tonight, he’s sleeping now.”

The Three Investigators wanted to climb into the interior of the submarine, but found that they could hardly find a hold on the smooth and now wet outer hull. It was probably only possible to get in when the submarine was on the water. Therefore they decided to postpone the investigation and return below the deck.

The rain intensified in the course of the day. And the wetter it got, the more the wind increased. In the evening the ship rocked so strongly that Dr Helprin fastened his instruments to the tables with thick brown adhesive tape as a precaution. The wind gauge at the top of the bridge spun at breakneck speed and the bow broke the waves with all its might, which then pushed it upwards again.

“What’s the weather forecast saying?” asked Jupiter, who was already pretty upset when he entered the bridge.

“That’s quite a breeze,” Captain Jason said calmly as he controlled the rudder. “Wind forces 8 to 9. But I’m afraid it’ll get worse.”

“Worse?” Jupiter staggered as the ship tilted to the side and clutched to a chair anchored to the floor. “Is it going to be so serious?”

“This is going to be a restless night. It’s best to sleep now if you can. Later, you probably won’t have a chance.”

“Can’t we bypass the storm area?” Jupiter asked hopefully. “Or wait until it’s gone?”

“Too late,” the captain replied and stared into the rain pouring down outside the window.

Jupiter staggered back to the stairs and descended into the now fully-equipped laboratory.

“And?” asked Pete, who was sitting there with Bob and the other crew members. “What’s the situation?”

“Hopeless.”

Carol took her video camera off her shoulder and put it on the floor. “I’m not sure if the viewers really want to see rocking equipment and green faces. I think I’d better get the camera back below.”

“Do you think it’ll be safer there?” Bob asked.

“No. But I’ll do it anyway.”

Soon nobody worked anymore. Everyone sat or stood in the bridge and waited for the storm to ease.

Professor Clark was as silent as the day before. But no one could blame him for that. Enrique was the only one still in a good mood. He told stories from his seafaring life. “Once,” he started laughing, “one of the scientists puked all over his computer equipment in a storm. There was a short-circuit and the data collected from several days were destroyed.”

Under normal circumstances, the three of them might have laughed out loud. But now no one could laugh anymore. “I don’t feel well,” Pete murmured.

Carol showed up again. “You might want to check your cabins sometime,” she suggested. “Mine looks pretty messy. All my clothes fell out of the closet.”

“I can’t walk now,” Pete moaned. “Otherwise, I’ll end up in the toilet.”

Suddenly a violent gust of wind seized the ship and threw it aside. A huge wave spilled onto the port side of the deck and for a moment there was a big puddle. A little water seeped under the rattling door. The wind howled and tore at the bridge that The Three Investigators feared for a short moment that it would simply be torn away, together with Captain Jason.

He appeared at the top of the stairs and called down: “Now it’s official, people. This gust had wind force 12! We’re dealing with a hurricane!”

7. Battle for *Deep Quest*

Jupiter remained bent over the toilet bowl. His stomach was completely empty, he was sure of that. Still, he wasn't feeling much better. "It was like a kind of diet," he murmured.

"Hurry up, Jupe!" called Pete and drummed at the door. "Or shall I puke on your bunk ___"

"I'm coming!" Jupe rose laboriously and tried to get rid of the sour taste in his mouth with water. Then he tried to open the door. The ship just tilted backwards and he couldn't get it open. A few seconds later it tilted forward, the door swung opened and the First Investigator fell into Pete's arms. Pete rushed to the toilet while Jupiter staggered past him and dropped onto the bunk. Bob was already lying on the bed opposite.

"I don't feel good lying down, believe me," Bob groaned. "I think it's better to stand than lie."

Jupiter didn't answer. He listened. Below deck, the storm sounded even stronger than above. Although the wind was not so loud here, it creaked and crashed at every corner. And at regular intervals, the engine that had been chugging quietly so far, howled furiously.

"The ship is getting a basking," Jupiter mumbled and closed his eyes, just for a moment, though. The roller coaster ride only got worse.

"What did you say?" Pete shouted.

"I said, the ship is getting a bashing!" Jupiter yelled.

Pete came back from the toilet. "Are you serious? Did Captain Jason say that?"

"No," Jupiter moaned. "Probably he doesn't know it yet." The engines howled again. "Something's happening on the deck. This trip was a crappy idea. The biggest mistake of my life. Tell me, Bob, why didn't you puke?"

"That will come," Bob promised. "Wait and see."

Suddenly something crashed so deafeningly loud that Jupiter drove up and hit his head on the bed frame again. "Ouch! Darn!"

"What was that?" Pete asked anxiously.

"That came from above!" Bob shouted.

"Something's happening on the deck, I told you so. Let's go up!" Jupiter jumped up, ripped the door open and crashed into Carol.

"Did you hear that? What happened?" she shouted.

"Let's go up!" the three responded.

At the same time and everyone rushed up the stairs. The heavy steel door could not be opened, as the wind pressed against it so strongly. Only when the ship tilted to the other side did they open it. At the same time a gust ripped the door out of their hand and threw it against the outer wall. They hurried to get out before the door slammed shut again. The wind took their breath away. The raindrops whipped their faces like little pinpricks. It was night, but the deck was bathed in cold light. All the lights were on.

A moment later, they also saw why—*Deep Quest* had detached itself from its anchorage and slipped over the deck, held only by an iron chain. Captain Jason, Enrique, Dr Helprin and Professor Clark stood around and screamed loudly about what to do. *Wavedancer* sank into a wave trough and the submarine was hurled around.

“Hey, Jupe!” Pete shouted and pushed the First Investigator to the side. A moment later the submarine crashed into the wall where Jupiter had stood earlier.

“Thank you, Pete,” he gasped. “Look, Dr Helprin is waving at us!” They made a wide arc around the unstable diving submarine and reached the four men.

“You offered me your help!” Helprin yelled. “This would be the right moment! We have to anchor *Deep Quest* firmly again, otherwise it will tear itself away completely and tip us over the railing!”

“Do you have an idea?” Carol shouted.

“There are chains with carabiners in the storeroom!” replied the captain. “Maybe we can use it to reattach them.”

“Where is the storeroom?” Pete asked.

“It’s at the forward end of the deck passageway!” He pointed towards the bow.

Pete nodded to Bob and the two braced themselves against the storm to get the chains. Mr Evans stood on the bridge controlling the rudder with a fierce grip.

“We have to work together!” Jason shouted. “Otherwise we won’t make it!”

Once again, the submarine crashed into the steel wall. A wave shot up the hull and soaked everyone to the skin.

As the ship tilted to the side, Carol suddenly slipped and slid across the wet floor into near *Deep Quest*. She tried to get up, but the deck was so wet that she fell again. Professor Clark ran up to her, reached out his hand and pulled her up at the last second.

“It’s too dangerous!” Jupiter shouted. “We’ll never make it!”

At that moment, Bob and Pete returned. They had the steel chains in tow.

“All right!” yelled Dr Helprin. “Two of us take one end of each chain, loop the chains around the submarine and tie them somewhere as soon as it is back on the wall! Then it can’t slip away!”

They distributed and held on to the chains and carabiners, and positioned themselves around the submarine. The sub stood still while the sea took its breath. Then the ship crashed against a new wave, lifted itself and *Deep Quest* slid backwards.

The last chain broke with a sharp bang and buzzed like a whip through the air. It hit a spotlight that shattered loudly. *Deep Quest* slid over the deck and dragged The Three Investigators and all the others, who were desperately clinging to the chains. It collided with the railing and for a moment Jupiter reckoned that the submarine would break through the railing and plunge into the sea. But at that moment the stern rose and *Deep Quest* slid back slowly.

“Now!” Jupiter yelled. This was their last chance. The railing would not survive another collision with the submarine. He pulled as hard as he could and hooked the carabiner onto a metal loop protruding from the wall. When *Wavedancer* tipped back, the submarine stayed in place. They had made it!

To take no chances, they secured *Deep Quest* with all other chains until the submarine finally looked like a prisoner chained to a dungeon wall.

Just as they were about to breathe a sigh of relief, another deafening crash sounded. The sound came from the bridge. They stormed into the bridge and up the stairs. One of the windscreens was broken, the wind swept into the room and a computer monitor had fallen from a shelf—right onto the radio system. Mr Evans lay on the floor shaking broken glass from his clothes.

“I’m okay!” he shouted quickly as he saw the worried faces. “But the bridge isn’t doing so well.”

Captain Jason took a quick look at the various equipment. "The radio got hit badly," he said. "But the rest still works—as of now. We have to seal the broken window, otherwise the water will destroy all the other equipment!"

They decided to nail a large piece of wood in front of the broken window. Together they successfully did this after a quarter of an hour.

"We can't start repairs until the storm has stopped. Let's go downstairs and get some rest. Mr Evans?"

He nodded. "Aye, Captain, I'll stay up here and make sure we don't totally lose course."

"All right. But let me know immediately if you need someone to take over."

They went down to the laboratory, where miraculously everything was still in place—thanks to the thick adhesive strips. Exhausted, they sat down on the chairs or squatted on the floor.

"We almost lost the submarine," Jason noted. "That was good work. My original team couldn't have done better." He smiled contentedly.

"They're lucky," Pete said. "They're allowed to lie in bed with the flu. How long will the storm last?"

"I don't know," Jason said. "But we should be passing the storm area soon, Pete. In a few hours, we'll be through the worst of it."

"Anyway, I'm no longer sick," Jupiter said relieved. "A duel with a submarine cured me."

Carol and Enrique laughed. "You've found your humour again, Jupiter," Carol said "That's a good sign."

When everyone had recovered a little, they changed out of their wet clothes in their cabins. But nobody wanted to stay alone, so they met again in the laboratory a little later.

Captain Jason was right. Although the ship was still rocking violently, the sea was slowly subsiding. As a result of the adventure The Three Investigators had survived, their suspicions was almost gone, and the attack on Pete almost forgotten. At that moment nothing seemed more absurd to them than to suspect one of those present.

Carol and Pete went below deck and both came back a short time later with some boxes full of food that everyone was enthusiastic about.

A few hours later the rocking of the ship had become so bearable that Carol fell asleep. And the three of them also slowly felt tiredness. As the storm weakened and the eastern horizon slowly turned grey, Jupiter, Pete and Bob gradually nodded off.

Bob awoke from his aching limbs. His whole body was hurt. No wonder, he had slept on the hard floor of the laboratory. Carefully, he raised his head.

Outside the sun was shining and the sea was reasonably calm. *Wavedancer* chugged along quietly. He looked around. Pete and Dr Helprin also slept on the floor, Jupiter and Carol were asleep on two chairs. The others weren't there. Bob got up, opened the door and went up to the deck. A breath of fresh air blew. He spotted Captain Jason at the railing.

"Good morning, Captain."

"Morning, Bob. Well, did you sleep well?"

"Like a stone. But now everything hurts." He took a deep breath once. "I can't believe how fast the weather has changed."

"Be glad. Neither we nor *Wavedancer* could have survived another night like this. Today is going to be a tough day. We have to inspect the whole ship and look for damage. The bridge has gotten a lot, but we haven't even looked at the engine room yet."

“Where are the others?” Bob asked.

Captain Jason pointed up—Mr Evans, the professor and Enrique were on the bridge. “Shall we go to the bridge?”

Bob nodded and together they set off. When they reached the bridge, they greeted the three.

“Have you checked out the damage yet? Is it very bad?” asked the captain.

“The radio is completely down,” Professor Clark replied. “But the rest is working reasonably well.”

“The radio...” Jason murmured. “That’s bad.”

Slowly he walked along the console and took a look at all the displays. Suddenly he startled. “Our position,” he said, tapping the navigation screen. “Either the display broke or we went miles off course.” He looked at the compass. “And we’re going in the wrong direction, too.” He turned to Mr Evans in surprise. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

Evans didn’t answer. Instead, without looking at him, Professor Clark said: “The direction is right, Captain.”

“What’s that supposed to mean? Did the storm mess up the navigation computer so much?”

“No, it’s working fine,” the professor said.

“Then we’re on the wrong course!” Captain Jason was beginning to get angry.

Bob suddenly had a queasy feeling.

“Change course, Evans!”

Mr Evans still didn’t say a word. “He won’t change course, Captain,” Professor Clark said calmly. He, too, looked forward steadfastly.

Captain Jason frowned, but then it seemed too colourful for him. “Then I’ll change course myself!” He reached for the wheel.

The professor turned around. He held a gun in his hand. “You won’t do that, Captain.”

8. Mutiny!

Captain Jason and Bob retreated in shock. “What are you doing, Professor Clark?” Jason asked irritably. There was an insecure indignation in his voice.

“I don’t want to hurt you, Captain,” the professor asserted. “I just want to keep you from changing course.”

Now the captain became seriously angry. “This is a bad joke, Professor! Part of the ship is badly damaged! It’ll take us a long time to get it back on track. So stop this nonsense.”

“This is not nonsense.”

Captain Jason reached for the wheel again. At that moment, Professor Clark held the gun to his chest.

“I’m serious, Captain Jason. Very serious.”

“What are you up to?” asked the captain, who had suddenly turned lime white.

“You’ll know soon,” the professor replied.

Someone came up the stairs. Jupiter looked around the bridge sleepily. “Good—” He saw the gun in the professor’s hand. “—Morning. What’s going on here?”

“Good of you to come, Jupiter. I can use witnesses. Professor Clark has staged a mutiny.”

“I’m in command now, Captain,” the professor announced. “You’ll be fine. You can still move freely on the ship. Only the bridge is off-limits to you as of today.”

“Evans!” Captain Jason called out. “Are you in cahoots with this man?” Mr Evans didn’t answer. “Serra?” Enrique also remained silent and avoided eye contact.

“Don’t bother, Captain. They’re on my side. Would you all please leave the bridge?”

The captain, Jupiter and Bob didn’t move. Only when Clark’s gaze darkened and he raised his gun again did Bob, Jupiter and Captain Jason start the retreat.

When they reached the end of the stairs, they were awaited by Pete, Carol and Dr Helprin, who had meanwhile woken up and realized that something had happened.

“What’s the matter?” Carol asked excitedly.

“Come with me!” hummed Captain Jason. “All of you! Now!”

Only when they were outside on the deck and had retreated to the stern of the ship did Bob and the captain take turns reporting what had happened.

“He’s really serious!” Carol said. “Unbelievable! This guy’s been acting weird all this time. What’s he planning?”

Dr Helprin clenched his fist and struck against the wall of the stern superstructure. “I knew it! I knew it! Clark is not a real professor. He probably doesn’t have a clue about hydrothermal vents. But how did he get on board *Wavedancer*? Why did Ocean Obs assign him to me?”

Captain Jason approached The Three Investigators. “What do you say to that?”

“What can the boys say, Captain?” Dr Helprin replied before one of them could reply. “They know the least about the whole mission.”

“Don’t underestimate them, Dr Helprin,” the captain said. “Sometimes the three of them know more than anyone. At least in my experience.”

“In this case, unfortunately not, sir,” Jupe said quickly before Bob and Pete could tell something about the events of the night before last. “We’re just as surprised as you are.”

“What do we do now?” Pete asked.

“Professor Clark may have a gun, but he seems to want to use it only in an emergency,” Jupiter said. “Besides, he’s letting us run free on the ship. We should try to figure out what he’s up to.”

“Can’t we somehow try to get the ship back to our control? I beg your pardon, Captain, but of course I mean you. That seems more important to me,” Bob interjected. “Is there any way to control *Wavedancer* from another location?”

The captain nodded. “There is... in the engine room.” He turned to the door that led below. The others wanted to follow him.

“Excuse me, sir,” Jupiter held the captain back. “But only two of us should go to the engine room. Professor Clark and his men can see us from the bridge. He’d get suspicious right away. I suggest that Pete accompany you.”

The captain took a quick look at the bridge. “You’re right, Jupiter. Come on, Pete, the rest of you stay here!”

They descended the stairs and walked along the corridor, past the cabins until they reached the heavy steel door to the engine room. A huge padlock secured the lock.

“Damn!” Captain Jason cried. “This lock doesn’t really belong here.”

“Jupiter probably suspected that,” Pete remarked. “That’s why he suggested that I come.”

“So? Why?” asked the captain.

“Because I’m an expert when it comes to locks,” Pete proudly announced. But suddenly his grin died. He hit his forehead with his flat hand. “I knew it all along!”

“What?” Captain Jason asked.

“That I forgot something. But when my mother asked me if I had packed everything, I thought of all kinds of things—only not of my lock picks. But who thinks that you need something like that on a ship?”

“Lock picks?” smiled the captain. “When I look at this padlock, I think a bolt cutter should do it.”

“Sure!” Pete shouted. “I hope there’s one on the ship?”

“Of course!” the captain said. “In the storeroom. That’s where we keep our tools. That’s also where you got the chains for fastening the submarine last night.”

Pete was on his way. He ran up the stairs and past the others. Then he carefully made his way to the bow in order not to be seen from the bridge. But when he reached the storeroom and pushed open the door, he was disappointed. The storeroom was empty. There was nothing there. Dejected, he returned to the others and called for Captain Jason, who had been waiting in front of the engine room. “They cleared everything out.”

“That’s not possible!” Dr Helprin shouted angrily. “You must do something, Captain! I’ve waited months for this chance and I won’t let this idiot Clark mess up my expedition. Get some help! Send a radio message!”

“The entire radio has been destroyed,” the captain reminded him.

“I don’t think it was a coincidence now,” Jupiter said. “I’m almost certain Evans deliberately destroyed the radio to prevent us from getting help. I suppose that’s what he had in mind anyway. The storm last night only gave him a chance to cover it up better.”

“You might be right about that, Jupiter,” Carol agreed. “But isn’t there an emergency radio?”

Captain Jason shook his head. “Not on a ship this size. But normally a radio message is sent to Ocean Obs at regular intervals. That can’t happen now. Ocean Obs might already have become attentive and try to contact us. The regulations state that a ship must be searched for if it does not report for twenty-four hours.”

“Searched for us? But how? We are no longer on our old course,” said Pete. “They’ll think the ship sank in a storm. Probably they’ll just be looking for the wreck—unfortunately not in the right place.”

“Wrong, Pete,” the captain said. “*Wavedancer* is constantly transmitting a radio signal. It is not integrated in the normal radio system. So Ocean Obs always knows where we are.”

The First Investigator frowned. “Don’t you think Evans destroyed that radio signal, too?”

“Unlikely,” the captain replied, grinning. “Because the transmitter is in my cabin. And it’s always locked.”

Pete sighed. “Thank goodness. When will the search party be here?”

“A search party would be a bit demanding, Pete,” Captain Jason said. “After all, Ocean Obs knows we haven’t been shipwrecked. They could assume that *Wavedancer* is damaged. This means that they will try to reach another ship near us by radio and ask it to look for us. It may of course be that this ship is only a few nautical miles away and can be here in a few hours. Or it could even take a whole day or longer.”

“But the twenty-four hours are not up yet,” Bob noted. “So we can count on support tonight at the earliest.”

“Right,” said the captain.

“Until then, we need to find out what’s going on here,” Jupiter said, determined.

“Do you have a plan yet?” Carol wanted to know.

“No,” Jupiter replied. “But that’s because something crucial is missing from a plan.”

“What is it?”

“Something in the stomach. I’m starving.”

As they sat below deck in the kitchen, having breakfast in silence, the door suddenly opened and Enrique entered.

“*Bon appétit*,” he wished in a good mood, as if nothing had happened. No one answered. Everyone saw the gun Enrique demonstratively wore on his belt. He went to the crates with the food supplies and packed some of them together, only to disappear again shortly afterwards, with the food.

They looked at each other, then Jupiter stood up and followed the ship’s cook. “Enrique!” he shouted as he ran up the stairs. “Stop!”

Enrique turned around. “Whatever question you want to ask me, Jupiter, I can’t answer you.”

“Why not?”

“That was a question too.”

Jupiter considered how to formulate a question that Enrique did not recognize as such. “You’re on the run—the professor, Mr Evans and you.”

Enrique laughed. “No. Absolutely not. We’re not dangerous criminals or anything. You don’t have to be afraid.”

Jupiter believed him. Still, it wasn’t enough. “What’s all this about? What does the professor want? What do you want?”

“I’m sorry, Jupiter. I can’t tell you,” Enrique replied.

“Why not? Is it something dangerous? Something illegal? Something exciting? What is it?”

Enrique gave it some thought. “It’s something you’re gonna like.”

Then he turned around and went to the bridge.

“Something I’m gonna like?” shouted Jupiter. “Right now, I don’t like all this at all. Enrique!”

The ship’s cook climbed the steps to the bridge without a word.

Jupiter sighed and looked out at the sea. Where could they be now? Which direction were they going anyway? He looked up at the sun. They were still heading south. The First Investigator went towards the stairs when his gaze suddenly caught on something. Jupiter blinked a few times. He wasn’t wrong.

He saw a ship crossing the horizon.

9. A Blazing Cry for Help

Pete almost swallowed a piece of bread when Jupiter opened the door and jumped in. “Jupe! What is—”

“A ship! There’s a ship out there,” gasped the First Investigator.

Captain Jason jumped up. “A ship? How far away is it?”

“Pretty far.”

“Is it heading our way?”

Jupiter shook his head. “We must somehow draw attention to it before it’s gone again.”

“Shouting and waving don’t seem to do much good,” Bob said, thinking feverishly. “But a flare gun! There must be something like that on the ship!”

Everyone turned to the captain.

“The flare guns were in the storeroom where the tools should have been,” he said crumpled. But then his face brightened. “The lifeboat!”

Now the others also jumped up and together they ran up on deck. The lifeboat was on the port side below the bridge. Now they would be inevitably seen by Clark and the others, but that didn’t matter anymore.

Pete, the first to reach the boat, tore the top off and found a large box with a red cross printed on it. He took it out, put it on the deck and opened it. Next to bandages, medicine and blankets, he found a small gun that looked like a normal revolver.

“Stop!” shouted Professor Clark, who had suddenly appeared at the corner of the bridge. He pointed his gun at the Second Investigator. “Put that thing back!”

Pete hesitated.

“Put it back!” Clark snapped.

The Second Investigator picked up the flare gun and pulled the trigger. It clicked. Nothing else happened. He forgot to turn the safety lever.

With a few quick steps the professor approached him and reached for the flare gun, but at the last second Captain Jason snatched the flare gun from behind Pete. Without hesitation, he turned the safety lever, held the flare gun in the air and pulled the trigger. A bright red glowing ball shot out, buzzing into the sky.

Professor Clark jumped forward, held his gun to the captain’s chest, and angrily snatched the flare gun from him. “That was a serious mistake, Captain!” he hissed. “A mistake you will pay for! Go below the deck, now!”

As they slowly turned around and went back to the stairs, Jupiter looked up. The signal ball was still floating in the air and glowing. Flare cartridges were constructed in such a way that they glowed for a particularly long time and remained in the air. If anyone was on the deck or the bridge of the ship over there, they should see the signal.

Below deck, the crew members were locked in their cabins by the professor. The last he got to were The Three Investigators.

“I wanted to avoid that,” he said while standing in the doorway. “But I just can’t afford for you to jeopardize the mission. I’ll send Mr Serra down to bring you something to eat. But you will stay in here until we reach our destination.”

He wanted to close the door, but Bob quickly asked: "Where is our destination, Professor? Where are you taking *Wavedancer*?"

"You'll soon know, Bob. All of you." He closed the door and locked it from the outside.

Jupiter immediately ran to the porthole and looked out. "You can see the ship from here. When they see the signal, they will probably try to make radio contact with us."

"But the radio is damaged," Pete remarked.

"Exactly. That means the ship will head to us to see if we need help. Professor Clark will probably try to assure their captain that everything is all right, but he might have overlooked one thing. See, you can open the porthole. If the ship is close enough, we can call for help."

The three stood crowded around the tiny porthole and stared at the ship. It was slowly moving away.

"They should have understood it," Pete said after a few minutes. "Slowly, they could change course."

But nothing happened. "I don't believe it!" Bob shouted. "When are they gonna start thinking about sailing over to us?"

"Maybe they didn't see the signal after all," Pete suspected, worried. "I can't believe it. That ship's pretty big."

"Somebody has to be standing somewhere all the time looking out for everything," Jupiter interjected. "I'm sure they're about to turn."

But the minutes passed uneventfully, the ship moved away further and further, until it was finally only a swampy line on the horizon.

"Pete cursed and hit his thigh with a clenched fist. "They didn't see us!" Dejected, they sat down on their beds.

"At least now we know who we can exclude from the circle of suspects," Pete murmured after some time. "I didn't think there were three people behind this, though. The least I would have suspected was Enrique."

"Behind what thing?" Jupiter asked.

"Behind what thing?" Pete snapped. "Are you out of your mind? Behind everything! The fumbling with the submarine, the destruction of the radio, the whole mutiny!"

"Are you sure all these really belong together?" the First Investigator continued unflinchingly.

"Well, sure! It's as plain as day, isn't it?" Pete got excited. He hated it when Jupiter would talk for hours about long established facts.

"Well," Bob started cautiously. "Actually, it's not crystal clear. What's the submarine got to do with the mutiny?"

"Exactly," Jupiter agreed with Bob's question.

Pete looked uncertain. "Clark or Enrique did something to it and then threw me into the ocean," he explained. "They were covered by Mr Evans, who pretended not to know."

"Maybe he really didn't know anything," Jupiter interjected. "As far as I'm concerned, the mutiny on *Wavedancer* and the sabotage—or whatever it was—on *Deep Quest* are not necessarily connected."

"Excuse me?" Pete asked.

"They have nothing to do with each other," Bob said. "You're right, Jupe. There could be no connection—at least not the kind we know."

"I suspect there's a double game going on here," Jupe said. "Somebody did something or attempted to do something to *Deep Quest*, but I don't think it has anything to do with this morning's mutiny. We should therefore keep the events of the night before last to ourselves

until we know what is actually going on here. First we need to figure out what Professor Clark is up to.”

Jupiter recalled what Enrique had said to him. “‘It’s something you’re gonna like,’ he said. So it doesn’t seem to be anything that really puts us in danger or is illegal in any way.”

“I find it pretty illegal to steal a ship and lock up the crew,” Pete replied. “On the other hand, the professor also seemed quite pleasant—despite the gun. Unfortunately, we will hardly be able to find out more. Nobody tells us voluntarily and we can’t do anything from here.”

“Maybe we can,” Jupiter murmured and looked out the porthole while he pinched his lower lip.

“Oh, yeah?” Pete said. “How’s can we, Mr First Investigator? We’re locked in here, remember?”

“Maybe we can get the door opened somehow,” Bob suggested timidly.

“Very funny! The door is steel, and there’s not even a lock I could pick—even if I had my lock picks. There’s a latch on the outside, and I can barely get to it.”

“I was thinking more of the porthole,” Jupe said.

Bob and Pete looked at the tiny opening. “The porthole? Nobody’s getting through that!” Pete exclaimed.

“Yes,” Jupiter disagreed and looked at Pete. “You.”

“Me?” Pete shook his head vigorously. “No way! Even if I should fit through this tiny little porthole, I have little desire to go swimming again. Once is enough for me.”

“You’re the only one up to the task,” Jupiter insisted. “Bob might fit through, but he’s not as good a climber as you are.”

“Exactly,” Bob quickly agreed.

“I can’t climb well either!” Pete exclaimed. “I’m miserable at climbing!”

“Come on, Pete,” Jupiter said flatteringly. “We all know that’s not true. You’re just the best at sports, and you’re the tallest of the three of us.”

“Don’t even try to butter me up, Jupe.” Pete said. “It won’t work this time. I’m not gonna climb out of that damn porthole. End of discussion!”

“Hopefully I won’t slide my sneakers off the wet outer wall,” Pete groaned as he squeezed his way through the porthole two hours later.

“We’ve secured you,” Bob reassured him.

They had tied a leash of knotted sheets around Pete’s belly. Bob and Jupiter had finally succeeded in convincing the Second Investigator—if he dropped, they would simply pull him back up again.

Pete hung helplessly in the opening for a moment, then managed to turn around and slip all the way out the porthole. Finally he squatted in the middle of the air, his feet against the lower edge of the porthole, his hands clawed into the upper edge. “All right,” he gasped. “I’m trying now. But don’t let go of the rope!”

“Now, Bob! Push him out and throw the rope out with him,” Jupe said and laughed.

“Exactly!” Bob shouted. “After the attack the other night didn’t work out, this is the opportunity to finally get rid of Pete. Ha ha!”

“That’s not funny!” Pete snapped and glared at the two of them.

Then he reached up with one hand and felt around the wall of the ship until he found a small ledge to hold on to. He pulled himself up. Now he stood with his feet in the porthole and looked up. It was still a good metre to the railing. Carefully he placed his right foot on

the porthole that had been opened outwards and pushed himself up. That won forty centimetres.

Pete had to climb like a steep wall climber from ledge to ledge, from hook to hook. He always made sure that he had a firm hold at three points while he looked for a new point with his foot or arm. Climbing didn't take much strength. Much more important was the accurate assessment of one's own weight and balance. If he didn't rush and didn't slip anywhere, there was actually no danger. At least that was what Pete was trying to tell himself as the water rushed beneath him at twenty-five knots.

For a moment he was stuck. There was no way going forward. He had to climb down a bit and try another way, but finally he reached the railing with his right hand and pulled himself up. No one was on deck and he climbed up. Fortunately he landed at the stern, and he could not be seen from the bridge. Pete slipped over the railing. He quickly undid the knotted sheet around his belly and tied one end of the sheet to the railing.

Bob had put his head out of the porthole and looked up at him. The Second Investigator grinned at him and held his thumb up. Then he sneaked towards the stairs, which led back below deck. As he went down, he thought about how stupid this situation was. First he made every effort to get to the top, and now he had nothing more urgent to do than to go down again.

When Pete reached the corridor, he saw his worst fears confirmed—padlocks had been attached to all doors behind which the captured crew members were located. Again, he regretted not having his lock picks.

Quietly he knocked on the door his friends were behind.

"No way!" he whispered. "There are padlocks here! I can't get you out!"

Jupiter and Bob didn't answer for a while. Then the voice of the First Investigator came through the door: "This is bad luck. Then try to figure something out on your own. Is the professor's cabin locked, too?"

Pete looked at the door across the corridor. "Probably not."

"Go check it out! Maybe you'll find something!"

"All right! See you later!" Pete went back, put his ear to the door of the professor's cabin. When he heard nothing, he turned the door knob. With a soft squeak the steel door swung inwards. Nobody was in the cabin. Quickly he slipped in and closed the door behind him.

There was chaos in the cabin—mountains of paper piled up on the three unoccupied beds. At first Pete wondered how the professor had managed to bring so much stuff on board. Also, the table was overfilled with papers. He took a closer look—there were barely legible handwritten notes, nautical charts and opened books.

Pete was almost certain that he would find some answers to their questions here. Only where would he start looking? Nautical charts were nautical charts and it was not unusual to find them in a ship's cabin. He searched for notes or other clues to the destination of their journey, but Professor Clark hadn't bothered to mark it anywhere. What would Jupiter do now? What would he be looking for? Maybe things you wouldn't immediately associate with sea travel.

Pete studied the titles of the books that were scattered everywhere. There was nothing unusual about that either—they were scientific volumes on marine biology, deep-sea fish and plate tectonics. Dr Helprin seemed to have been wrong when he questioned Professor Clark's credentials. This mess looked like a professor to Pete.

Then he noticed a book called *Cryptozoology*. He didn't know what it was, but it sounded very scientific, too. Then his eyes fell on a book that he found to be a bit out of place. He

frowned and was about to pick it up when he heard a sound. Someone was coming down the stairs. Steps approached the door—and stopped right in front of it!

10. Solution to the Puzzle?

Pete looked around feverishly. The cabin was tiny. There was hardly any place to hide, except...

He threw himself on the floor and rolled under one of the two double beds. There he painfully hit his knee against an obstacle—the professor had a suitcase under the bed. Pete curled up to find room next to it. He accidentally pushed the suitcase out a bit under the bed. He wanted to pull it back, but it was too late. The door was opened at that moment.

The Second Investigator only saw a pair of shoes. Judging by the small size of the feet, it had to be the professor.

He went to the table. Paper rustled. Suddenly Pete felt a tingling sensation in his nose. That was probably the cold he had been waiting for since he fell into the ice-cold water.

He pressed his index finger under his nose to suppress the sneezing stimulus. The tingling got worse.

The professor turned to leave, then paused. And came towards the bed!

With one kick he sent the suitcase back to where it was—and handle of the suitcase rammed onto Pete's knee. The pain twitched through his body and scared the sneeze off for a moment, but the Second Investigator could barely suppress a cry of pain.

Clark went to the door, opened it and left the room. Only when his footsteps had faded away did Pete dare to wheeze quietly. He waited a few more seconds before he carefully pushed himself out from under the bed and stood up.

His knee hurt a lot. Pete walked over to the table slightly limping. He noticed one of the charts was missing.

The Second Investigator decided to finish his investigation as soon as possible. He picked up one of the unused pillows and removed the pillow case. He put the pillow back under the blanket so that the lack of the cover didn't stand out at first glance. Now he put everything that seemed interesting to him into the pillow case. There were a few of the note sheets, a card, some books, including the one that had caught his eye earlier. Then he tied the bundle together and left the cabin.

Nobody was on deck, the professor had probably gone back to the bridge. Pete scampered to the spot where he had climbed up and looked over the railing.

This time it was Jupiter who looked up and breathed a sigh of relief when he discovered Pete. He pointed to the bundle and told the First Investigator to catch it. As Jupiter stretched his hands out of the porthole, Pete dropped the bundle, and Jupiter caught it.

The Second Investigator then tied the knotted sheets around his belly. Then he set out on the descent, which was much easier despite his injured knee. After all, he now knew the best way.

Two minutes later Jupiter and Bob pulled him back into the cabin, where Pete let himself fall onto the bed exhausted. "I won't do that again, I swear! Clark almost got me!" He gave a detailed account of his experiences.

"You just took the notes with you?" Bob cried. "He'll know that right away!"

"Of course he'll notice," Pete replied irritated. "But by then, we may already know the truth. Besides, I couldn't have read all that stuff on the spot. It would take me till tomorrow!"

"All right. It was definitely good work, Pete," Jupiter praised and patted the Second Investigator on the back.

"You don't have to do that," Pete said. "You better promise me for the next dangerous stint, it's your turn to do it. I'm on vacation from today—no matter what."

"All right, that's a promise," Jupiter said casually and it was immediately clear to everyone that he wasn't serious. "Let's see what beautiful things you've brought us." He untied the pillow case and reached in. Little by little, they spread out the entire contents on the bed.

"You can hardly read these chicken scratches," Bob noted as he was holding the professor's notes. "But they seem to be indications of direction. I'm guessing it's an exact route to our mysterious destination. He's calculated how long we'll be on the route and where he'll have to change course."

"Can you figure out where he's taking us?" Pete asked.

Bob looked at the maps and charts and studied the records again. "I don't know much about ship navigation," he confessed after a few minutes. "But I can handle maps. If I'm not mistaken, *Wavedancer* is heading straight for that point." He tapped on the nautical chart. There was a small island in the middle of the Pacific. "This is Lebrato Island. Jupe?" He looked at the First Investigator questioningly.

"I should probably give you a short talk on Lebrato Island now," Jupiter said. "All right. This small island north of the Galapagos was discovered in the eighteenth century by the Spaniards. Today it belongs to Costa Rica. When the Spaniards settled on the island, they found traces of an ancient Maya tribe who must have lived there about a thousand years ago." Jupiter then remained silent, but Pete and Bob continued to look at him expectantly. "I'm sorry, but that is it. That's all I know."

"Weak, Jupe, weak. I would have expected more from you," Pete smirked.

The First Investigator boxed him in the shoulder. "You've never heard of Lebrato before, have you?"

"Right," Pete admitted outright. "So now we're going to Lebrato. What does Professor Clark want there?" He was thinking, then suddenly he snapped his fingers. "I got it! He's probably looking for old Maya treasure!"

Jupiter frowned. "Then why would he hijack an entire ship? It might not be a problem to get to Lebrato by any other means."

"All right," Pete said. "No Maya treasure then. But that reminds me! I have something very interesting in my pillow case." He reached in and pulled out the book he had noticed in the professor's cabin.

"*Dinosaurs and Other Prehistoric Animals*," Bob read and laughed. "What's so interesting about that?"

"Don't you find it unusual for a marine biologist to deal with dinosaurs?" Pete asked, offended.

"If it's his hobby," Bob replied. "Why shouldn't a marine biologist carry books like that around with him?"

"Do you have anything else in your grab bag?" Jupiter asked.

"I'm afraid not," Pete said.

"What else was lying around in his cabin?" Jupiter asked.

Pete shrugged his shoulders. "Just books. Lots of paper."

"What kind of books?"

"I don't know," Pete replied a little annoyed. "Books on plate tectonics and cryptozoology and marine algae and any fish and—"

"Wait a minute," Jupiter interrupted him. "Cryptozoology? Are you sure?"

"Yes. Why? What's that?"

"That is..." Jupiter began and paused.

"What?" Pete asked indignantly. "Come on, Jupe!"

"Give me the dinosaur book again!" called the First Investigator excitedly and finally seized it himself. He leafed through it. Some pages were marked. Jupiter studied them carefully.

"Would you please share your brainstorm with us?" Bob demanded impatiently.

Jupiter did not allow himself to be put off, but read on. Finally he laughed briefly. "I have a theory."

"That's almost what we thought," Pete wanted to know. "What's the theory?"

"It sounds absolutely crazy and maybe I'm completely off." He was silent again.

"Jupe," hummed the Second Investigator. "You may be a little full, but I think we'll be able to push you through that little porthole with our combined efforts if you don't tell us what you're thinking right now."

"Cryptozoology," he finally began, "is the study of and search for animals and especially legendary animals in order to evaluate the possibility of their existence. It includes previously unknown animal species, or animals that are thought to be extinct but perhaps not. Cryptozoologists are the very people who have been searching for the Loch Ness monster in Scotland for years or the Yeti in the Himalayas because they are convinced that these beings actually exist." He held up the dinosaur book. "Well, does this ring a bell?"

"You don't mean like..." Bob started. "No. That's too absurd. You are suggesting that Professor Clark is looking for some prehistoric monster?"

"The marked pages in this book are about prehistoric reptiles that lived in water," Jupiter continued. "And we're on a ship here. And..." He took a dramatic break, "we have a submarine on board!"

Bob walked restlessly up and down the tiny cabin. "When are they gonna get us out of here? I'm getting hungry!"

"We really need to talk to Professor Clark," Jupe continued. "If my theory is really true ___"

"Your theory is crazy, Jupe," Pete remarked.

"Yeah, but if it's right, Clark won't deny it," Jupiter said. "Maybe he'll even let us go when he realizes that we know. He won't have to hide anything from us anymore."

"We know about what?" Pete shook his head. "He'll laugh at us if we give him that garbage. Dinosaurs have been extinct for sixty-five million years, and every child has known that since *Jurassic Park*!"

"Today, there are still some animals with prehistoric ancestors," Jupiter disagreed.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Pete asked.

"Well, sea turtles and crocodiles, for example," Jupiter said. "These species were around sixty-five million years ago... and probably much earlier."

"So what? That's not proof!" Pete exclaimed.

"That's not what I'm saying," Jupe clarified.

"You don't believe that nonsense, do you, Jupe?" Pete continued.

"Don't get upset, Pete. I was just thinking out loud," Jupe said.

"He's probably looking for Maya treasure, after all," Pete murmured. "Or he transports nuclear weapons somewhere on the ship, which he wants to hand over to the Mafia on Lebrato. Or anything else. But he's certainly not looking for dinosaurs."

"Well, you've found this book in his cabin!" Jupiter exclaimed.

"I..." Pete couldn't think of anything else. "Say something, Bob!"

"What do you want me to say?" Bob snapped. "I think we should confront Professor Clark. The only question is whether we'll get a chance."

"When will we reach Lebrato Island?" Jupiter asked.

"If I estimate our position correctly, we should be there tomorrow." Bob looked out of the porthole. "It's almost dark. The day went by fast."

"We woke up late, too," Jupiter remarked. "Besides, a lot has happened today." He sighed, then he smiled. "Aunt Mathilda won't be happy if I tell her this story. She's never gonna let me go anywhere again."

"Shh! I think someone's coming!" Pete whispered. Very quickly, they hid Professor Clark's items under the bed.

Steps were heard in the corridor. A bunch of keys jingled, then something scratched the door and it was opened. Enrique was standing at the door with a tray in his hand.

"Sorry, *amigos*, it took a little longer."

"Yes, it is," Bob said outraged. "My stomach is already hanging down to my feet. We also want to talk to Professor Clark."

"That won't be possible," Enrique said. "Tomorrow you can talk to him. Not now."

"We know where we're headed," Jupiter claimed. "And why."

Enrique smiled. "You're not stupid, Jupiter, but I don't think you could have guessed it."

"Not guessed. Logically deduced. If the professor doesn't want to talk to us, tell him to take a close look around his cabin."

"In his cabin?" Enrique frowned. "Why?"

"Just tell him," Jupiter replied and grinned. "Then we'll see if he wants to talk to us or not."

"All right," Enrique said, puzzled.

Five minutes later, Professor Clark stood in the doorway and glared angrily at them. "How did you get into my cabin? Your door was locked!"

"Who says you have to go through the door?" Pete said calmly and smiled complacently.

"You have invaded my cabin! How did you do it?" Professor Clark questioned them.

"It doesn't matter," Jupiter said coldly. He firmly intended to keep the upper hand in the conversation and not to be intimidated. "We know what you have in mind."

"You do?" Clark obviously didn't believe a word he said. "And what would that be?"

Jupiter took a shot in the blue: "You're looking for some prehistoric animal—a dinosaur!"

11. The Being from Prehistoric Times

The three watched the professor's unapproachable façade collapse. The hostile traits gave way to a mixture of relief, guilt and defiance. He looked at them for a long time. Then he said, "Prehistoric animal, yes, but not a dinosaur."

"Excuse me?"

"I'm not going after a dinosaur," the professor clarified. "It's a common mistake. Most people have a tendency to think that any large, extinct reptile is a dinosaur, but true dinosaurs have a number of distinctive anatomical features that set them apart from other reptiles. In addition, there were no ocean-going dinosaurs. Dinosaurs lived on land."

"But you actually want to find a prehistoric animal?" Pete interrupted. "I, uh, I mean, a living one?"

Clark nodded. "I know what you're about to say, Pete. But they're not extinct. Not all of them."

"I know. Turtles and crocodiles," Pete remarked. "That's what Jupiter has been talking about."

"And plesiosaurs." Clark added.

"What's that again?" Pete asked.

Professor Clark sighed. "Come with me," he said and left the cabin.

"You're letting us out?" Bob asked in surprise.

"I never really wanted to lock you up. But I had no choice when you tried to stop me."

He went on deck and the three detectives followed him. The professor was a different man. And they were dying to hear his story.

The sea was so calm that the storm last night seemed like a bad dream to them. The sun had already set, but the western sky was still shining clear blue, while it was almost completely dark in the east. Professor Clark leaned on the railing and looked into the distance, while The Three Investigators stood beside him.

"When you look out like that, you sometimes have the feeling that the ocean has no end at all, don't you think?" Professor Clark said. "Thousands of miles of water around us. And below us, it's two miles deep. Just water. We've only seen a fraction of the earth. And there are actually people who claim to already know everything. And these people call themselves scientists."

"So you mean that there are still creatures down there in the depths of the sea that mankind doesn't know?" Bob asked.

"Hundreds! I'm convinced of that!" Professor Clark exclaimed.

"But how did you come up with the absurd... the idea that there might still be a prehistoric animal somewhere in the world?" Pete wanted to know.

Now Clark turned to them. "Prehistoric animals have populated the earth for millions of years. On the land, in the air and in the water. And sixty-five million years ago, it was suddenly over. Some scientists claim that a giant comet collided with the earth and swirled up gigantic clouds of dust that darkened the sun for decades. This made it so cold on earth that countless species died out. Others believe that there has been a natural climate change that

these animals have not been able to cope with. But no matter what the theory was, the sea is largely immune to such changes.”

“Why is that?” Bob asked.

“Because water takes forever to cool down. The sun could not have been darkened for so long for the entire water masses of the earth to become significantly colder. And even if that happened, it would have been so slow that most life forms could have adapted, be it simply by looking for warmer waters. Because unlike land animals, creatures of the sea have hardly any geographical limits. They can be at home almost anywhere in the water world.”

“But animals eat plants,” Pete said. “And plants need light. If it was dark on earth for decades, hardly any animal could have survived.”

“It’s different in the deep sea,” Professor Clark said with a smile. “Because it’s always dark there. And yet there’s life there. You look at the objective of Dr Helprin’s research. Although he may be a stubborn fool, but he too agrees that there is far more life in the deep sea than we could ever have imagined.”

“But you’re talking about some kind of prehistoric animal here,” Jupiter said. “Not some plankton.”

“As I mentioned earlier, I am talking about a plesiosaur.” His eyes glowed with enthusiasm. “A plesiosaur is not a dinosaur, but a large swimming reptile that resembles something that is part reptile and part fish. To be precise, I am looking for a plesiosaur known as an *Elasmosaurus*... Wait here! I’ll be right back!” He ran to the stairs and disappeared below deck.

“Well, either he’s totally crazy or there’s really something to his story,” Pete whispered.

Shortly after, the professor came back. In his hand he had a book. He opened it and held a drawing to the three detectives. “This is it—the *Elasmosaurus*.”

The animal had a streamlined body with a short, pointed tail, and four fins on its sides like a turtle. It had a small snake-like head with an extremely long and thin neck.

“Looks crazy,” Pete found. “And an animal like that really lived once?”

“I’m sure it used to live,” Professor Clark said. “And I claim it still does.”

“Why this species of all species?” Bob asked.

“*Elasmosaurus* belongs to the plesiosaur family,” the professor explained. “However, unlike its relatives, it survived until the end of the Cretaceous period, according to the accepted scientific opinion. All other species were already extinct earlier.

“If they have survived so long, it is not impossible that they will continue to exist afterwards. Sea creatures have always been much greater survivors than land animals. Just look at the sharks—they’ve been around since time immemorial, they existed before the dinosaurs blossomed. Or the rare fish known as the coelacanth. This species have been swimming in our seas for four hundred million years. For decades they were considered extinct—until they were rediscovered in 1938, and scientists were surprised to find that the species had survived the whole time.”

“Really?” Pete raised his eyebrows in surprise. “I didn’t know that.” Questioningly, he looked at Jupiter.

“It’s true.” Jupiter nodded. “I’ve read of such discoveries before.”

“But how big are these *Elasmosaurus*?” Bob wanted to know.

“They found fossils fourteen metres long,” the professor said.

“Fourteen metres?” Bob was gasping for air. “But such giant creatures cannot have remained undiscovered for thousands of years—especially with all the technical equipment that exist today.”

“I wouldn’t say that,” Professor Clark disagreed.

“In recent years there have been repeated discoveries of animals that had not been known before. And I don’t mean tiny little insects, but really big animals. In 1976, for example—not so long ago—when an unknown fish became entangled in the anchor of a US Navy ship.

“It was a completely different shark that could not even be assigned to a previously known genus. They called it a Megamouth shark because it had a giant jaw. And Megamouth was almost five metres long. You’d think someone would have noticed such a big animal before. But the sea holds secrets of which we have no idea.”

Pete was visibly impressed. “Are there any more such cases?”

“Some, such as the giant squid. Very large squids have already been pulled out of the sea or washed up. But no one’s ever seen those really big ones before. However, squid tentacles of tremendous length have been found in the stomach of sperm whales, which love to eat squids. Also, it is common to find circular scars made by squid suckers on the skin of sperm whales that have attacked squids. These scars were so huge that it is assumed that these squids could be up to twenty metres in length.”

“Wow!” called Pete. “I thought that was only possible in monster movies. Or *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.”

Professor Clark smiled contentedly. “That’s what a lot of people think.”

But Jupiter was far from convinced. “How did you come up with this plesiosaur of all the species? And why here?”

Now the professor turned back to the sea and seemed to tell his story more to the water than to the three of them. In the meantime the western horizon was also dark and the first stars sparkled in the sky.

“I’ve been involved in cryptozoology for years. The thought that plesiosaur could still live somewhere in the world has fascinated me since my childhood. There are legends of sea monsters all over the world. In the meantime, many of these old stories have been explained. What sailors used to think were monsters were actually whales or big manatees.

“By chance, I came across a book about Lebrato Island. The island was formerly inhabited by Maya peoples. They used a written language a thousand years ago and old stone slabs and paintings were found on the island. Among other things, these records reported huge sea monsters that were in the vicinity of the island. Monsters with very long necks stretched out of the water. From then on there was no longer any doubt for me that there are such monsters. The difference here is that they don’t come from imagination, but from the past.”

“Shouldn’t they have been discovered by now?” Bob went after it. “If the Maya people saw it a thousand years ago, why can’t you see it now?”

“Lebrato is uninhabited today. But there is another interesting fact that supports my theory—the island lies on the edge of the Cocos Plate which is an oceanic tectonic plate. This is a kind of underwater plateau—an area in the sea that is not very deep. At the plate boundary or edge, however, it goes down vertically. Near Lebrato, the edge is about one hundred to two hundred metres deep. Then it abruptly drops another two to three thousand metres. So if the Maya people saw sea monsters at that time, they might have come directly from the deep sea.

“I believe that plesiosaurs have become deep-sea inhabitants over the last sixty-five million years. Only in great depths was it possible for them to survive the catastrophe to which all other creatures fell victim. Because not much has changed there for millions of years, in contrast to land. And now they only sometimes come up and show themselves, for whatever reason. Maybe to give birth to their young. Who knows?”

“You have very interesting theories,” Jupiter admitted after a while. “For me, all this still sounds very... fantastic, but I don’t want to put forward an antithesis. I don’t know enough about the matter. But what were you thinking when you captured this ship, sabotaged Dr Helprin’s research, and locked the crew up?”

“That was... self-defence, so to speak,” the professor replied. “Believe me, I’d rather have seen it another way. But they left me no choice.”

“They left you no choice?” Bob exclaimed. “Are you saying that you were forced to take control of the ship?”

“Indirectly, yes. I’ve been working for Ocean Obs for years. And for a long time, I’ve been applying one application after the other to get a research trip financed. I was rejected every time. Chartering a research vessel is expensive, especially with a high-tech submarine like *Deep Quest* on board.

“This investment was too risky for Ocean Obs. The reason why my applications were rejected were always stated as the success of such an expedition was too uncertain to take the financial risk. In other words, they think I’m some crazy nut. At Ocean Obs, no one believed me. I’ve really done everything humanly possible to convince them of my theories, but without success.

“I could never have paid for such an expedition alone. This ship costs a few thousand dollars a day. Not to mention the submarine. Research submarines are rare.”

“And there you have simply gone with your people on this ship to take it over in due time,” Jupiter said, stunned. “How did you get on board, anyway? Actually, a completely different team was planned for this trip.”

Professor Clark smiled. “I poisoned the crew.”

12. The Captain's Decision

"You what?" Pete shouted in horror. At the same moment he thought of the food Enrique had brought them and that they had eaten greedily. Instantly, his stomach became dull.

"Of course, not really poisoned," Professor Clark said. "But I made sure the team contracted the flu."

"How?" Pete asked.

"They had to go to a medical examination. There, I managed to get them injected with a flu virus. I know this isn't exactly the best way. But I couldn't have brought Mr Serra and Mr Evans aboard *Wavedancer* otherwise. And myself."

"Of course they happened to be in the right place at the right time to replace the sick team," Jupiter concluded.

"That's right. Dr Helprin was the only one I had to spare," the professor remarked. "Without him, the expedition would not have taken place at all."

Bob sighed deeply. All this new information was a little too much. He had to digest that first. "What are you going to do now? Don't you think it's time to release the others?"

"So Helprin and the Captain can change course and foil my plan? No!" The stubbornness that The Three Investigators had known about the professor in the past few days came back instantly.

"But you can't leave them locked up for days!" Bob cried.

"I don't intend to," the professor said. "Tomorrow we will reach Lebrato Island. Then I'll release them. Once we get there, Helprin will realize that there is no harm to look around on the seabed. Maybe I can even convince him of my idea."

"After what you've done here?" Jupiter was sceptical. "You're making yourself liable to prosecution for everything you do right now. If we go back, that'll have bad consequences for you."

"Only if someone reports me," the professor said. "Mankind has been mistaken for decades! There is at least one plesiosaur species that has survived, perhaps even an entire genus. Once I find the plesiosaur, nobody will bother how I did it."

"I wouldn't be so sure about that," Jupiter disagreed. "The end never justifies the means."

"I have to take my chances," Professor Clark said. "This is the only way I can get to carry out my project. Once I prove my theories, no one will resent my means."

"If you've proved that..." Jupiter murmured. He didn't think much of such idealism, but arguments were powerless against the professor. Probably, he could only be stopped by force. And Jupiter caught himself thinking that he wouldn't stop him even if he could.

"Even so, you should immediately resort to more peaceful means if you want to avoid major trouble," Jupiter said. "Or do you intend to walk across the ship with your gun drawn all the time? Sooner or later, you're gonna have to give the ship back to Captain Jason. At least when you get on the submarine yourself."

Clark sighed. "You may be right, Jupiter. Believe me—nobody would have preferred to start this journey peacefully than me. But I had no choice."

"How are you going to find this creature?" Pete asked. "Are you going to just dive in with a submarine and look for it? I don't suppose that you'll find it that way, even if it

exists.”

“Both *Wavedancer* and *Deep Quest* are technically very well equipped,” explained Professor Clark. “That’s why I chose this mission for my purposes. There are excellent sonar systems that show me where something is moving under water and how big it is. In addition, there are many deep crevices and caves at the Cocos Plate. I suspect that the plesiosaur lives there. I just have to be patient.”

“Have you ever considered that the legends of the Maya peoples... are nothing but legends?” Jupiter asked cautiously.

“No legend is just a legend. Everywhere there is a core of truth,” the professor claimed. “Nobody coincidentally makes up a sea monster with a long neck. Sometimes it was just a floating branch or a reflex on the surface of the water. But maybe it was something much more incredible.”

“Unbelievable,” Pete groaned when they were back in their cabin two hours later. They had been on deck with Professor Clark the whole time and kept talking to him. With bright eyes and enthusiasm in his voice, he had brought them close to the details of his theories and his project, and The Three Investigators had listened with fascination.

“One thing’s for sure...” Pete remarked. “The professor really believes what he says. He’s not interested in scientific recognition at all. He doesn’t want to be famous or anything.”

“Yes,” Bob agreed. “And money doesn’t matter either. He just wants to present a discovery to the world—if there is one. But...” His voice went down. “I’m almost ready to believe him—not that I think that there are any plesiosaurs left. But maybe there really are beings down there that no human has ever seen—at least not since the Maya peoples a thousand years ago.”

Bob instinctively pulled his head in a little. He expected a thunderstorm of counter-arguments that Jupiter would let loose on him. But to his surprise he didn’t do so. “You’re not saying anything, Jupe. Do you also believe the professor’s story?”

“What do you mean ‘also’?” Jupe answered. “You should know me. I want to see proof. I won’t believe anything till I see it.”

“But are you convinced that there’s no prehistoric creature down there?” Bob asked.

“No,” Jupe said. “The discovery of the Megamouth shark is making me think. So along the same lines, it is possible that plesiosaurs still exist.”

“Man! That would be so cool!” Pete exclaimed enthusiastically. “If this creature really existed! Wow! On the other hand, do you know if that thing is a carnivore?”

Jupiter laughed. “I know what you’re thinking, Pete. The neck of a plesiosaur is not exactly short. So it could easily have a look over the railing of *Wavedancer* to choose its lunch. You can remain below the deck as soon as we get to the island.”

“No way!” Pete exclaimed. “I want to be there when something happens! At least on the bridge.”

Suddenly Jupiter became thoughtful. He pinched his lower lip. Finally he said: “I just noticed something. All these creatures make us forget there’s another mystery to solve—who tampered with *Deep Quest* two nights ago?”

“You’re right, Jupe,” Bob agreed. “We haven’t answered that question yet. There’s still no connection between these two cases. Or is it? You look like you’re onto something.”

“I have an idea but not exactly a solution,” Jupe said. “Wouldn’t it be possible that Professor Clark just dished up this whole prehistoric creature story to distract us from something else? From *Deep Quest*, for example?”

“You mean everything he just told us was a lie?” Pete cried in disbelief.

“Maybe,” Jupiter added. “Or it’s really about finding a plesiosaur. But he sensed that our search for answers might lead us to something that he wants to keep secret. So he preferred to tell us the truth to prevent us from finding out more than we should.”

“What could it be then?” Bob wanted to know.

“I don’t know,” Jupiter confessed. “It’s only a guess. But we should definitely stay vigilant. And when we reach Lebrato Island and the professor goes in search of his plesiosaur, we must not let him out of our sight.”

In the early morning everyone was on the deck of *Wavedancer*. It was sunny and warm, in the meantime they were very close to the equator. The sea had become even calmer, so the ship could plough unhindered quickly through the water.

Mr Evans was on the bridge and Enrique was in the engine room. The Three Investigators had persuaded Professor Clark to release the others now and not in the afternoon, when they reached the island.

When Captain Jason noticed that he was no longer threatened with a weapon, he wanted to arrest the professor and his two helpers immediately. But The Three Investigators asked him to listen to the professor’s motives and only then make a decision.

After the prisoners’ indignation had vanished, Clark had quietly and objectively explained to them why he had taken control of the ship and what he was after.

Captain Jason and Carol watched and listened to the presentation without interfering. But Jupiter had already noticed that both were fascinated by the professor’s theories and had almost forgotten that they were prisoners.

But immediately afterwards Clark was attacked by Helprin with words and since then the two of them have been arguing non-stop.

“You’re crazy!” Dr Helprin exclaimed. “This is completely absurd! Do you understand what I’m saying? Absurd!”

“You don’t have to yell like that, Dr Helprin, I’m not deaf.” Professor Clark shouted back.

Dr Helprin turned to the captain and said: “Captain Jason, take this ship back to its old course.”

The captain cleared his throat. “I don’t think you’re in a position to give me orders.”

“Are you saying you’re on his side?” cried Dr Helprin, so horrified that his voice rolled over.

“I’m just saying that I still decide where the ship goes and where it doesn’t,” Captain Jason said. When the captain got involved in the discussion, Carol split from the group and disappeared below deck.

“You decide where the ship goes?” Dr Helprin shouted. “Don’t make me laugh! Where was your decision-making power yesterday? Take the ship back to its old course. At full speed, we only lose a few hours.”

“I’m the captain of this ship and I decide when it goes where,” Jason insisted.

“This expedition is being paid by Ocean Obs, and they put me in charge,” Dr Helprin said.

“Expedition, yes, but not the ship,” Jason countered.

“You don’t believe the absurd ideas of this lunatic! Prehistoric animals in the Pacific! That’s totally...” Dr Helprin struggled for words. His face had turned bright red and the veins on his neck and forehead were thick.

Captain Jason stayed calm. “We’ll reach the island in a few hours. Since we are almost there, there would be no point in reversing things that have been done. If we make our way to your hydrothermal vents tomorrow, you’ll only lose one day.”

“Just one day? I don’t have a research team anymore. There’s not enough time! I have to work day and night to make up for it. One day less means the loss of hundreds of valuable measurements—and thus the loss of a lot of money that Ocean Obs has put into this project. If I’m lucky, I’ll get to keep my job.”

“I will support you in your work once we have reached your destination,” the captain promised. “And I’m sure that our three boys will also be involved.”

But Dr Helprin couldn’t be reassured. “You can’t be serious! With all due respect, Captain, you have as little idea of this work as our three random companions or Miss Ford. And there is no doubt about the incompetence of our professor.”

Captain Jason looked at Helprin coldly, then he turned around abruptly. Dr Helprin immediately turned back to the professor and their argument flared up again.

“Can they agree today?” Pete whispered.

Then he saw Carol, who had reappeared on deck with her camera. She began filming the battle of words between the two scientists. With a gesture she told the three detectives not to draw their attention to her. But it was already too late. Dr Helprin turned his head in her direction.

“Put that camera away!” he yelled at her. “I’m warning you, if this comes out on any TV programme, I’m coming after you! It’s ruining my reputation!”

“That could be because you’re acting impossible right now, Dr Helprin,” she replied calmly.

Now Helprin was bursting at the seams. “Has everyone here gone mad? Get that thing away, I said!” With a few quick steps he stepped up to Carol and snatched the camera off her shoulder. She could barely prevent it from falling to the ground.

“Now the two of them are also shredding each other,” Bob groaned. “This could take forever until something happens here. I think I’m going to have breakfast now.” But just as Bob was about to go below, Captain Jason came back.

“I’ve made a decision. And you will listen to me now. Everybody!” Carol and Dr Helprin fell silent and looked at him expectantly. “We will continue our journey to Lebrato Island.”

Helprin wanted to interrupt, but the captain did not let him speak. “There, Professor Clark—you will have exactly twenty-four hours to provide evidence, or at least an indication, that something exists there that is worth investigating. At the end of this period—if you haven’t found anything—we will return and go back to the hydrothermal vents. There everyone, including me, will support Dr Helprin in his work so that he can complete the tasks according to his schedule. If the research takes longer, we’ll stay. I will take responsibility for the delayed return of the ship. Dismissed!”

“Twenty-four hours?” Professor Clark shouted. “But that’s not enough! We must be very lucky to be able to—”

He was interrupted by Dr Helprin. “How can you work with this lunatic? How can you answer that he might ruin my research?”

The captain’s eyes narrowed. “I’ve told you that I have made a decision—and that is not a matter for discussion!”

“Why do you alone make decisions that concern the entire crew?” Helprin hissed.

Captain Jason lowered his voice to a threatening whisper. “Because I am the captain of this ship.”

13. Waiting for the Monster

“I knew you’d like it, Jupiter,” Enrique said smiling. *Wavedancer* raced at top speed towards the island.

The professor had asked the captain to get the most out of the engines so that he had a little more time for his search. In view of the delay due to the storm and mutiny, the research team, with the help of the detectives, had to carry out the two-day test and check activities within a day. Dr Helprin took care of his measuring equipment together with Pete and Bob. Enrique, Mr Evans and Jupiter examined the submarine.

“I like Professor Clark’s idea,” Jupiter admitted. “But I do not like at all the methods he used—and in how you participated.”

Enrique didn’t seem to mind that accusation. “There was no other way,” he said while measuring the air pressure in the ballast tanks. “If we’d asked nicely to make a detour to the island, we wouldn’t be here right now.” Then he focussed on his technical work.

“The pressure’s fine. Fortunately, the ballast tanks weren’t damaged in the storm. If they’d sprung a leak, we would have to forget about the dives. Once *Deep Quest* have gone down, it would never come back up again.”

“You only have twenty-four hours,” the First Investigator skipped the technical explanations. “I’m sure this isn’t what you had in mind.”

“Maybe there’s enough time,” Enrique side-stepped and quietly kept busy with the submarine.

Jupiter was worried. He feared that Professor Clark might use violence again after the deadline had expired. Enrique’s remark had in any case not been able to convince him otherwise. Then he thought of Pete’s observation three nights ago. They still hadn’t found out who had been tampering with the submarine—and why. Now Enrique and Mr Evans climbed into it to take a closer look. Both were suspects and would now have the opportunity to do so unhindered, after having been interrupted by Pete earlier.

“How about you, Mr Evans?” asked the First Investigator as casually as possible. “Are you all right?”

“The power lines to the batteries have gotten a bit damaged,” he explained. “But I can fix it.”

“Batteries?” Jupiter asked.

“Yes, the submarine is electrically powered. A diesel engine would consume too much air for combustion. And as you know, it’s scarce under water. But with batteries, a submarine of this class cannot stay under water for very long. After about ten hours the batteries are flat and have to be charged on board with a generator.”

“How long will it take you to get it to work?” Jupiter asked.

“This should be done in a jiffy. After that I still have to check the other systems, but I think we were lucky. *Deep Quest* survived the storm well, despite its brief hike across the deck.” He pointed over to the railing whose metal struts had been dented by the impact of the submarine. “But such a submarine has a very stable built, as it must withstand enormous pressure under water.”

After about twenty minutes, Mr Evans said: "Okay, I'm done with the batteries. Now, I have to check the communications system."

Mr Evans explained to Jupiter that under the sea, radio communications would not work because radio waves do not travel well through salt water. Therefore, they use an Underwater Acoustic Communications System with devices known as underwater telephones. The system works by modulating the voice signals to a high enough frequency and transmitting it through the water in the form of sound waves.

Jupiter could watch the two men repairing the submarine as long as he wanted. Even if they were sabotaging something right in front of his nose, he wouldn't notice. He just didn't know the technicalities well enough for that. He then decided to go to Pete and Bob. Maybe he could help them with something.

In the early afternoon the deep voice of the captain roared over the chugging of the engine: "Land in sight!"

Immediately everyone looked forward and saw land for the first time in three days. The small island shimmered as a green spot on the horizon. Captain Jason stopped the engines and *Wavedancer* glided silently over the water until it finally stopped completely after a few minutes and bobbed up and down slightly in the shallow waves.

"Now it's your turn, Professor," said the captain, as the entire crew had gathered at the bow and looked over to the distant island. "Where do you want the search to begin?"

"I'll go to the bridge and get my maps and calculations," he said. "Mr Evans will monitor the sonar and tell us if anything is happening."

"Now it's getting exciting," Pete whispered. The Three Investigators went to the bridge and watched the professor work. He had finally calculated a course and started the engines of *Wavedancer* again. At low speed the ship turned and sailed in a wide arc around the island.

"We are now pretty much above the edge of the Cocos Plate," he explained. "With the sonar, we can measure how deep the water under the ship is." He tapped on a small computer screen showing a schematic representation of the seabed below them. At the edge of the plateau it went steeply down.

"It's almost vertical down there," Professor Clark said. "We will now move along this edge. I expect the plesiosaur to live in the deep sea, but to come up from time to time. Underwater, there are currents that flows similar to upslope winds that blows up a mountain side. The water from the depth flows upwards the edge. Fish or other sea creatures probably use this natural current to carry themselves upwards. So it will show up somewhere along the edge."

"If it shows up..." Jupiter interjected.

"And what if your creatures prefer to stay home in the deep sea today?" Pete asked. "Or we just happen not to be where it is."

"Don't be overly pessimistic!" Professor Clark snapped.

They stared at the computer monitors in silence. A steady, echoing beep came from a small speaker. It was the sound signal of the sonar system, with which one could not only measure the underwater landscape, but also detect movements in the sea. But apart from the monotonous beeping there was nothing else. They waited a quarter of an hour.

"It can take hours before we discover something," the professor remarked after a while. "So be prepared for a long wait."

Carol entered the bridge. "Well, any luck?" she asked. The three of them shook their heads at the same time. "Just let me know in time. After all, I want to be the first to get a

plesiosaur in front of my lens.”

Suddenly the beep changed. It got higher and sounded at shorter intervals. A blinking dot had appeared on the computer screen moving across the seabed.

“There’s something!” Mr Evans shouted excitedly. The point was joined by a second, then a third and a fourth. They quickly slid toward the centre of the monitor, which marked the location of *Wavedancer*. “There’s more than one. They’re coming at us. But they don’t seem very big.”

The Three Investigators stared breathlessly at the rapidly approaching points. “Where are they?” Pete asked.

“Starboard ahead,” Mr Evans replied. “They’ll be so close we’ll be able to see them.”

Pete and Carol ran to the window of the bridge and looked out. A few metres from the ship, the water suddenly curled, then something that looked like a dorsal fin split the waves and disappeared again. “There was something!” called the Second Investigator. “There was something! Look at that, guys!”

Now Bob and Jupiter rushed to the window and looked outside. Carol picked up her video camera and filmed. The something appeared again, but this time it was not only the dorsal fin, but the whole animal. It jumped out of the water in an elegant arc and dived back again.

Jupiter laughed. “A dolphin. And there’s another one!” In fact, there were four dolphins who rounded *Wavedancer*, did some jumps and then went down again.

“And I thought it was the creature,” Pete moaned and laughed nervously. “Man, guys, I don’t think this monster hunt is for me. My nerves won’t go along with that.”

“I filmed dolphins,” Carol grumbled. “Do you think that’s what my station expects me to do?”

Dr Helprin, who was down in the lab, had also seen the animals. “Well, that was four monsters from prehistoric times!” he called up mockingly. “A remarkable success, Professor.” Clark ignored him and continued his work.

Throughout the afternoon The Three Investigators watched the computer monitors and the water alternately. The dolphins showed up a few more times. Nothing else happened.

No treacherous beeping of the sonar, no head that suddenly emerged from the sea, nothing. The hours passed and with them the hope to discover something diminished.

They stood at the bow of the ship, which had circumnavigated the island once in the meantime, and looked at the hazy horizon, which the setting sun coloured red.

Bob said what Pete and Jupiter secretly thought: “I hate to say it, but I’m afraid it was a shot in the dark.”

“Do you really think so?” Pete was looking for a remaining glimmer of hope.

Bob sighed, “The longer I stand here staring at the water, the more stupid I feel. And the more I doubt the professor’s theories. What he told us last night sounded incredibly fascinating. But now I think it wasn’t what he said, it was how he told it. Let’s face it, we all wanted to believe it, didn’t we? But after hours of staring at the sonar monitor this seems very unlikely to me. Prehistoric sea creatures in the Pacific!”

“Time wasted. That’s what I said!” sounded Dr Helprin, who had approached them unnoticed from behind. “I’m glad you agree with me by now. A little late, I’m afraid.”

“I think the professor deserves a chance,” Pete disagreed.

“He can have as many chances as he wants,” replied Dr Helprin angrily. “But it shouldn’t be at other people’s expense. And certainly not mine!”

Jupiter sighed deeply. "If we leave tomorrow without doing anything, it'll be a tough blow to him. I just hope he stays calm and doesn't try to take over the ship again."

"If he tries, I can't guarantee anything," Helprin said grimly.

At dinner there was a depressed atmosphere. Professor Clark had stayed on the bridge to monitor the instruments. Nobody said a word. Secretly, everyone except Dr Helprin, had hoped that there would be something.

Helprin made some biting remarks in the beginning, but when he saw that no one was going into it, he remained silent. When it was quite dark, The Three Investigators and the others went back to the bridge, where nothing had happened in their absence. They didn't expect that to change in the next few hours.

Carol was the first to say goodbye. "I'm tired as a dog," she yawned. "Wake me if anything happens."

Gradually Enrique, Dr Helprin and Mr Evans disappeared, until only The Three Investigators, Professor Clark and the captain remained.

"Won't you go to sleep?" he asked.

"No way!" Pete shouted, but he didn't sound very convinced. "I'll stay here until something happens."

Three hours later he had fallen asleep on his chair and Bob and Jupiter sank slowly into the realm of dreams.

Jupiter was in a dream talking to a dolphin about the theory of relativity when another voice mingled into their conversation: "Jupe! Wake up! Jupe!" He managed to say goodbye to the dolphin before he opened his eyes and blinked. "What's the matter?"

"There's something!" Pete whispered excitedly and pointed to the sonar monitor.

Suddenly the First Investigator was wide awake and looked at the screen. A blinking dot approached the centre. "Are you sure it's not just another dolphin?"

"I'm sure of it," the professor replied. "Something just came up from the abyss. It's slowly moving toward us. And it's bigger than a dolphin. Much bigger!"

14. Night Tracking

The Three Investigators and Captain Jason were standing on the bridge together. They listened tense to the beeping of the sonar system, which became faster and faster.

"How deep is it now?" Pete asked.

"Just below the surface," Professor Clark said. "Just a few metres."

"It's pitch dark outside. We should aim the spotlights at the water so we can see it," the Second Investigator suggested.

"No!" warned the professor. "We'll scare it away. Wait! Wait! Here it comes!"

The beeping became hectic, then the dot slipped just past the centre of the screen and continued its way. They held their breath. Nothing happened in the next few seconds. Then *Wavedancer* began to swing slightly. The swing stopped for a while before the waves calmed down again. The time intervals of the sonar echo became longer and finally the dot disappeared from the screen.

"It must have been huge when it set the water in motion like that!" shouted the professor. "We must get the submarine ready immediately, Captain! We've got to get down while it's still down there somewhere!"

"No," Captain Jason said strictly. "Not at night!"

"But, Captain," Bob said. "It's moving away from us!"

"It's too dangerous in the dark. And you wouldn't see anything anyway except with the instruments. And we have them up here."

"Then we'll have to follow it!" the professor decided. "We can't let it get away!"

"All right!" Captain Jason gave full speed and took the helm. Within a short time *Wavedancer* had turned and accelerated and raced with twenty-five knots across the calm water.

"Nothing to see yet," Jupiter reported, staring spellbound at the monitors. "Hold on! Yes! There it is again!" The blinking dot had appeared at the edge of the screen. "We're catching up slowly!"

"Can't you go any faster, Captain?" shouted the professor. "It is swimming straight to the abyss!"

"The engines don't like that, but I'll try," said Captain Jason. The ship howled and then shot through the night a little faster.

"We'll make it!" Bob shouted excitedly. "We're catching up!"

After two minutes they had almost caught up with the point. But suddenly Professor Clark groaned. "It has reached the abyss and it's going down!" The signals weakened until finally none of the instruments registered a movement anymore.

"Damn it!" Clark punched the console with his fist. "It has swum across the edge and disappeared into the depths! Probably the ship made too much noise and it fled."

His disappointment did not last long, but soon turned into enthusiasm. "But we have something tangible! I knew it! Too bad Dr Helprin's already gone to bed. What do you say now, Captain?"

"I don't want to disappoint you, professor, but don't you think it's possible that it was a whale? There are many of them in this area."

Professor Clark shook his head firmly. “No way. It came from the deep sea. If it was a whale, it’d have come up to breathe, and we would have seen or heard that.”

“You’re right about that, though. All right, Professor Clark. At dawn, three of you will go on *Deep Quest*.”

Jupiter grinned. “And I already know who’s gonna be there.”

“Do you really want to do this, Jupe?” Pete asked the next morning worried as they stood at the railing at sunrise and watched as the submarine was being prepared for diving.

“Would you like to take my place?” the First Investigator replied with a grin.

“Absolutely not!” Pete exclaimed. “But what do you do if... if there really is a creature down there? If it attacks the submarine?”

“I don’t think it would do that. Besides, it probably wouldn’t like *Deep Quest* very much,” Jupiter said. “Also, I promised you I’d be next when it gets dangerous. And of course I’m going to keep my word. Apart from that, there was one seat left. Professor Clark and Carol are on the first dive and Mr Evans wasn’t particularly keen on looking for the creature. Enrique only wants to go the second time, and it was clear from the beginning that Dr Helprin couldn’t be bothered.”

Then Jupe lowered his voice. “Besides, we still have to solve the mystery surrounding *Deep Quest*. What better way to do that than being aboard? Maybe a little dive will answer our questions.”

“What if something happens?” Pete didn’t give up. “Maybe the man I was watching actually sabotaged something that Mr Evans and Enrique didn’t notice during the checks. Or it was even one of them.”

“All the more a reason to find out on the spot,” Jupiter said.

Bob laughed. “Admit it, Jupe, you don’t really want anything but to be the first to discover the plesiosaur. Maybe they’ll even change its name and name it after its discoverer—the ‘Jonesaurus’!”

“We’re ready!” Professor Clark interrupted their conversation. “Let’s go!”

The submarine had been attached to the crane. Mr Evans started the engine and the winch groaned and lifted *Deep Quest* up. Then the arm was swung around until the submarine floated on the water. Finally it sank slowly and half into the sea.

“I’m off, fellas,” Jupiter exclaimed. “Keep your eyes open! I hope you’ll represent your First Investigator with dignity while he’s exploring the ocean.”

“Sure,” Pete said. “Say hello to the creature for us!”

“I will,” Jupe said. “I’ll invite it to our headquarters.”

The two detectives went over to the others. The necessary equipment was already aboard *Deep Quest*. Professor Clark, Carol and Jupiter climbed down the ladder on the outer wall of the ship one after the other and entered the submarine through the narrow hatch. Jupiter was the last one. He waved again, then closed the hatch above him.

“How do you lock this thing?” Jupiter asked. The professor showed him and a moment later they were sitting in an absolutely airtight capsule.

The interior of *Deep Quest* was very small. There were only two very flat seats. The third crew member—in this case Jupiter—had to sit on the floor. Around the viewing dome were the control panels with countless switches, buttons, displays and screens.

“Do you know anything about this submarine?” Carol wanted to know, who had already got her camera ready, although there was nothing to film yet.

“Of course I do. I’ve been aboard a research submarine many times before. In principle, they are all the same and easy to control. Come on, I’ll show you!” Professor Clark explained the individual systems to them one by one. “And with this lever it goes down. The air in the ballast tanks is compressed by a pump and water is fed into the tanks. This will cause the sub to sink. Like this...”

From the viewing dome, at first, they saw the sky. Then they saw *Deep Quest* slowly going into the water. When fully under water, the sea was light green. The sun had just risen and made the waves glide above them.

“Crazy!” Jupiter remarked. “How deep are we going?”

“To the bottom,” the professor suggested. “We are close to the island so it’s only about a hundred metres deep. *Deep Quest* is designed for a thousand five hundred metres, so that’s no problem at all.”

Professor Clark reached for the underwater telephone. “*Deep Quest* to *Wavedancer*. *Wavedancer*, come in, please!”

Captain Jason’s voice bleared from the telephone. “*Wavedancer* here. How are you down there?”

“Wonderful, Captain. All systems are working fine.”

“Well, go find your prehistoric animal. But don’t stay down too long. Maybe *Deep Quest* has some damage that Mr Evans and Mr Serra missed. I want you back up here in two hours at the most. Over and out.”

“Roger. Over and out,” the professor said.

The submarine slipped fast into the depth. Now the professor turned the propeller on. A quiet whirring sounded and a tremor went through *Deep Quest*, then it slowly picked up speed. “It’s easy to steer. The joystick steers the rudder and hydroplanes. The rudder are for side-to-side turning, and the hydroplanes for rise and descent. Here, Jupiter, you want to give it a try?”

The professor released the controls and Jupiter reached forward between the two. Carefully he pushed the lever to the right. The boat swung to the side. Then he tried it in the other direction, this time a little harder. He was amazed at how agile the submarine was. “It’s like a computer game,” he said and laughed.

“This joystick is hardly different from a computer joystick. It’s real fun.” Before them a swarm of small, silver shining fish appeared. Jupiter steered the boat right into it. The fishes drifted apart and for a moment *Deep Quest* was surrounded by silver flashes, then it left the swarm behind.

“We will move to the edge of the plateau. Where the animal went yesterday. I’ve noted the position.”

Professor Clark took control and steered the sub in another direction. It got darker and darker. Finally the ocean floor appeared below them. The submarine glided over the sandy bottom for a while. Crabs scurried away and a small shark curiously circled *Deep Quest* before it went away. Carol stuck her camera to the viewing dome and filmed everything. “Awesome. I think this could become a hobby of mine.”

“An expensive hobby,” Jupiter remarked. “Such a submarine is priceless.”

“Then I’ll just tag along and become a marine biologist,” Carol decided. “This seems even more exciting than working for television.” After a few minutes they reached the edge of the plateau.

At a depth of a hundred metres the light was already quite weak and so they only saw the abyss suddenly appearing in front of them at the last moment. Professor Clark steered the sub

a bit along the edge, then turned it so that they could see the edge of the plateau directly in front of them.

"To save power, maybe we should touch down," he said and let the boat sink to the sandy bottom.

Jupiter grabbed the telephone. "*Deep Quest* to *Wavedancer*. We are now at the edge of the plateau and have just touched down."

"Hi, Jupe!" Pete's voice rang out. "What's it like down there?"

"Fantastic! You're missing out! But you didn't want to board at any price."

"I'm still happy, too," Pete said. "Carol's hopefully filming all the time. I'll watch the video at home."

Now Carol bent over the telephone. "Deal, Pete. We're gonna have a nice video night at your headquarters!"

Professor Clark checked the displays and spent some time studying the instruments. "Is there anything yet, professor?"

He shook his head. "Now we can either wait here or take a look into the abyss."

"I don't mind," Jupiter remarked.

"All right. Here we go again." He started the propellers. The humming swelled to an angry rattle. *Deep Quest* didn't move.

"What's the matter now?" Jupiter asked, worried.

"I don't know. We're kind of stuck." Professor Clark tried again. Now the submarine struggled a little, but it still remained in the same place.

"The sand," Clark said. "It's loose, the sub's buried itself in it. Like tyres in mud."

"And how do we get free again?" Carol wanted to know.

"We can just pump air back into the ballast tanks," Jupiter suggested. "We're gonna have to get up sometime."

"That won't be necessary," the professor said. "I will give the engine full power for a moment, then the propellers will free us. It might jerk a little, so hold on, please!"

Jupiter clung to the backrests of the chairs and waited anxiously. The propeller growled, the boat trembled, but nothing happened.

"All right, we'll use force then," Professor Clark decided and hit full throttle. There was a violent jolt. The sub freed itself from the sand and shot towards the abyss. But the moment the propeller was released, it howled and there was a loud bang. Suddenly sparks shot out from the rear of the sub. The light went out. And *Deep Quest* raced across the edge.

The howling of the propeller died and it became completely silent on board.

Carol whispered in a trembling voice, "What was that?"

"I don't know. Something's burnt through. We're out of power." Below them, a black abyss yawned. The submarine sank—down!

"Let me have a go at it," Bob pushed and grabbed the telephone. *Deep Quest* hadn't contacted us in three minutes. That was decidedly too long for him.

"*Wavedancer* to *Deep Quest*. Any news?" No one answered. "*Wavedancer* to *Deep Quest*, come in, please!" No answer. "Hello, *Deep Quest*, can you hear us?" Bob looked questioningly at Pete.

"If this is another one of Jupe's jokes, I'll wring his neck," Pete snapped.

"Jupe may be joking, but I don't think Professor Clark is," Bob said. He called the sub again.

"I don't like it," muttered Captain Jason. "I don't like this at all."

Bob's heart beat faster. He got hot, and he felt his throat tightened. "Do you think something's happened?" Before the captain could answer, Bob grabbed the telephone again and called *Deep Quest*. It was unsuccessful.

Pete went to the sonar monitor. "The submarine has disappeared from the screen!" he shouted.

15. Landing on the Plateau

The darkness slipped towards them. It was pitch black in the submarine. Not a single light shone.

“We’re sinking!” Carol shouted. “We’re sinking fast! Do something!”

“I don’t know what! We’re out of power!” Professor Clark exclaimed.

“First we need light,” Jupiter said and was surprised how quiet his voice sounded. And he was close to panicking. “There’s gonna be a flashlight here.”

“There’s a toolbox at the back,” said the professor. Jupiter turned around and groped his way.

“At the back? I can’t see!” He didn’t know his way around that submarine.

Suddenly there was light. A small flame lit up. Carol held up a lighter.

“Thank you,” Jupiter said relieved. He discovered the box and soon found the flashlight. He hung it on to a handle on the wall panelling.

“We are now at two hundred metres,” the professor noted and tapped on the depth gauge, which functioned mechanically and was therefore still in operation.

“Why are we sinking so fast?” Jupiter asked.

“I kept flooding the ballast tanks when we landed earlier so we wouldn’t get caught in a current.”

“Then bring us back up now!” Carol demanded energetically.

“I have been trying that all the time, Miss Ford. It won’t work!” the professor exclaimed. “Without power, I can’t operate the pump that pushes the water out of the ballast tanks.”

“But... but then...” Jupiter swallowed. His mouth was dry as a desert. He didn’t express the thought. “How deep is it here?”

“You can’t say for sure. There are some mountains and plateaus down here that are only a thousand metres below the surface. But the real bottom of the sea is... three thousand metres deep.”

“Three thousand? A thousand and five hundred is the limit! That’s all *Deep Quest* can take!” Jupiter looked at the depth gauge.

In the meantime they were two hundred and fifty metres below sea level. No more daylight penetrated into this depth.

“We gotta get this thing going again! Quickly!” Professor Clark climbed from his seat and pushed himself past Jupiter. There he reached into the toolbox, pulled out a screwdriver and started unscrewing a cover in on the rear wall of the sub. Jupiter didn’t know what he was going to do, but he grabbed a second screwdriver and helped him. As they took off the metal cover, a pungent metallic odour smell hit them. Then they saw an inscrutable cable clutter.

Some cables were burnt through. Among them were four large blocks of white plastic. Parts of the plastic had melted and deformed. One of the blocks looked like it exploded. Jupiter assumed that that was the cause of the sparks.

“This is the battery compartment and these blocks are the batteries,” the professor explained. “But...” He frowned.

“What’s the matter?” Carol shouted, scared. “What’s broken?”

"A lot. But that's not the problem," Professor Clark said. "These batteries... They're not the right ones."

"What do you mean by that?" Carol asked.

"These batteries are not the correct ones for this submarine. They must have been replaced."

Jupiter moaned. "So it wasn't you," he murmured.

"Excuse me?" the professor asked.

"I'll explain later. Can we fix the burned cables?"

"Yes, but it won't do much good. Check this out—the insulation's melted. This caused a short circuit. The batteries should be gone—except one." The professor pointed to a block that looked intact. The cables leading away from it were also still intact. "So we still have power."

"But nothing seems to work here," Carol remarked. "Nothing!"

"This is weird. Some components have to work." Suddenly Clark's face brightened. "The heating system! It's the heater!"

"Can't we just switch the connections so that the pump works again with this battery," Jupiter suggested.

"We can, but it'll take time. I have to find out which power line leads to the pump."

"We don't have much time!" Carol shouted. "We've reached a depth of five hundred metres!"

Jupiter pinched his lower lip. He was feverishly thinking. He had experience with technology, but this submarine was a completely new thing for him. If given one day, he could familiarize himself with all the systems. But he only had a few minutes. He was annoyed that he had not been paying attention to the repairs that Enrique and Mr Evans had done. Desperately he tried to remember something that could help them. Then he had an idea. "Professor Clark! Can the rudders be operated?"

"Yes, they can," The professor replied. "The joystick controls the rudders and hydroplanes."

Jupiter snapped his fingers and reached into the tangle of cables. "When Mr Evans checked the systems, I watched him. I think the yellow cable here connects the power supply to the underwater telephone."

"The telephone's no use to us, Jupiter!" Carol shouted a little hysterically. "Six hundred metres!"

"Yes, it is useful." Jupiter connected the yellow cable to the good battery. Then he hurried forward and grabbed the telephone. "*Deep Quest* to *Wavedancer*, come in!"

"Jupe!" he heard Bob's relieved voice. "What happened?"

"We're almost without power, and we're about to crash. Everything else later. You got us on screen?"

"Yes," Bob exclaimed. "We followed you with the ship and are right above you!"

"Bob, can you see any plateaus near us?" Jupiter asked.

It took Bob a moment to answer. "Yes, about a hundred metres west and eight hundred metres below you."

Jupiter then turned to the professor. "Professor, I have this idea. Since the joystick works, and if we're lucky, we can direct the submarine during our fall to this plateau and land there. Bob can direct us from *Wavedancer*."

"Good idea," the professor said. He looked at the compass and then tore the joystick around hard.

Jupiter got back on the telephone. "Bob, we will attempt to land on the plateau. Please keep giving us our exact position!"

"You're heading for the plateau now," Bob said. "Ninety metres forward and six hundred and fifty metres below you."

The professor moved the joystick spasmodically. *Deep Quest* sank quickly and hardly made any headway. Every minute Bob announced the new position. "Sixty to five hundred... forty to three hundred... fifteen to one hundred."

"This is gonna be tight," Jupiter murmured. "This is gonna be close, close, close."

Carol panicked and kept an eye on the depth gauge. "We are at a depth of a thousand four hundred metres."

"You're almost there!" Bob shouted. "A few more metres!"

Since there was absolute darkness around them, the impact came abruptly. *Deep Quest* crashed onto the rock plateau and slid on with a frightening creak. The three inmates were shaken to pieces.

Jupiter's head hit against the steel wall. The submarine tilted slightly to the side and finally stood still. For a moment they did not move and waited for the next disaster, but nothing happened. They breathed a sigh of relief.

Jupiter took a look at the depth gauge, then with trembling fingers, he picked up the underwater telephone. "*Deep Quest* to *Wavedancer*. We've landed! At exactly one thousand four hundred and sixty-eight metres."

The three of them sat back and took a breather—a rather long breather. They can't imagine how lucky they had been.

Then Carol resumed conversation and whispered: "I think somebody's trying to kill us!"

"Us? Do you know anyone aboard *Wavedancer* who's after your life?" Jupiter asked.

"I... uh, no," Carol replied.

"Neither do I," Jupiter said. "And you, professor?"

"Well, Dr Helprin hates me. But I don't think he'd kill me."

"Maybe he just wants to thwart your expedition," Jupiter thought. "On the other hand, he needs the sub himself. He'd probably rather push you overboard than damage *Deep Quest*. Besides, the sabotage took place before anyone even knew of your plans. That leaves only two people to be considered—your two associates, Enrique and Mr Evans."

"Out of the question," the professor contradicted. "I'll put my hand in the fire for the two of them."

Jupiter, Professor Clark and Carol sat around the battery compartment fixing what could be repaired in the light of the flashlight.

Professor Clark meanwhile found out that the wrong batteries were too strong and had burned through the lines when he went on full throttle. There was a short circuit and three of the four batteries were destroyed. Now they only had a quarter of their original power source left.

Some cables could not be replaced or repaired, therefore it was not possible to supply power to certain areas of the submarine. They had been sitting here for more than two hours, changing connections and replacing cables. While working, Jupiter told them about Pete's involuntary dive four days ago and the various theories they had about it.

"At least now you know that neither Professor Clark nor I committed this attack," Carol remarked. "But maybe we should postpone the criminological discussion until we're back on top. We can't do anything from down here anyway."

"Agreed."

Professor Clark connected one more cable in the battery compartment. They went forward and Jupiter operated a switch. The interior lights came on.

"Thank goodness!" Carol moaned. "That flashlight wouldn't have lasted much longer."

"I'll turn on the headlights," Jupiter said. "I'd like to see where we actually ended up."

Abruptly the blackness in front of the viewing dome was brightly illuminated. To their right stretched the flat, sandy landscape of the plateau. The headlights illuminated small particles floating in the water, nothing else could be seen. No animal, no plant. In this depth there was still life, but most of it was microscopically small. The landscape before them looked spooky, but that wasn't what made Jupiter flinch suddenly.

To the left of the submarine was the abyss. One of the two runners at the bottom of *Deep Quest* hung over the edge of the plateau. That's why the submarine was not in a horizontal position. During its impact it must have turned unfavourably and come to a standstill in that position.

"We were lucky," Jupiter said. "That was really sharp."

"We can still slip," Carol said pessimistically.

The professor picked up the telephone and said: "*Wavedancer*, this is *Deep Quest*. Come in, please!"

"This is *Wavedancer*." This time Captain Jason was at the other end. "How are things with you?"

"We've been able to fix some things, but not everything," the professor said. "The light, the sonar, the communications and the robotic arms are working again. But now we lack all other measuring instruments, the heating and—worst of all—the water pump. We can't surface."

"There's nothing you can do?"

"If we try to connect the water pump, we risk that even the last battery will blow up on us," Professor Clark explained. "We would not dare to do so until all other possibilities have been exhausted. We can continue to tinker a little, but it wouldn't be bad if you thought about a little rescue."

"How much time do we have?" the captain asked.

"We still have air for about nine hours," the professor said.

"All right, we'll figure something out. Over and out!" Captain Jason turned to his crew. "Okay, guys. We've got nine hours to get *Deep Quest* back to the top. I expect suggestions."

Dr Helprin silently stood there, Enrique ran nervously up and down, while Mr Evans stared dully into space. Bob and Pete were the most worried.

"What about the rescue ship?" asked the Second Investigator.

"What rescue ship?" Enrique was surprised to hear.

Pete explained to him that a ship would have to be on its way in the meantime to check on *Wavedancer*, as there had been no radio contact with Ocean Obs for more than forty-eight hours.

"I can't understand it," the captain replied. "We are only about six hundred miles from the coast of Costa Rica. The Galapagos Islands are only two hundred miles south. There are always ships in this area. Even if they were extremely slow, they needed at most twenty hours to Lebrato. They should have been here by now."

"Are you sure the transmitter's working?" Bob asked.

"One hundred percent," the captain said. "I've checked it out a dozen times. Ocean Obs knows our position. And they should have sent help by now. But maybe we shouldn't rely on it coming."

Pete gnawed at his index finger. "Can't we just pull up *Deep Quest* somehow?"

“I’ve thought of that,” Mr Evans joined the conversation. “But it’s a thousand and five hundred metres below us. We don’t have a rope this long.”

“What about the island?” Bob asked and looked over at Lebrato.

“It’s uninhabited,” Captain Jason said. “There’s nothing there to help us.”

“And if we go to the Galapagos Islands and get help ourselves?”

“There’s not enough time,” replied the captain. “At full speed, it’ll take us ten hours one way.”

“Damn it!” Pete said and started running up and down. “There must be some way!” During his walk through the bridge, his gaze fell on the sonar monitor.

“Hey! Look!” The submarine was a luminous point at the edge of the schematically depicted plateau. There was another point that came up. Out of the abyss, something was approaching *Deep Quest*!

16. Into the Abyss

“*Deep Quest*, come in, *Deep Quest*, come in!” Pete’s voice came out of the telephone excitedly.

“This is *Deep Quest*,” Carol said. “Something’s coming at us from below! Something big!”

“We are seeing something as well,” Pete replied. “It’s now about a hundred metres below you!”

Jupiter barely dared to breathe. “Professor! Do you think that’s it? The plesiosaur?”

Professor Clark didn’t answer. He stared at the sonar monitor with his eyes wide open. The object appeared quickly. It was getting closer.

“Switch off all the lights!” shouted the professor. “Whatever it is, is attracted to the lights.”

Jupiter switched off both the headlights and interior lights.

“What’s going on down there? Can you see it yet?” Pete shouted.

No one answered.

“Hey! Can you hear me?” Pete shouted again.

“Yes,” Carol replied angrily. “Quiet please!”

“But what...” Pete continued.

“Thirty metres to go,” she whispered.

When the point was only ten metres below them, the three leaned forward as far as they could to see through the viewing dome into the depth. Seconds passed. With the few lights on the control panels, they suddenly sensed something huge in front of them. The thing smashed onto the viewing dome with force. As it struck, the three could make out that it was long and cylindrical, something that looked like a huge snake. The three were shaken violently. Metal creaked, *Deep Quest* tilted to the side—and fell.

“It pushed us into the abyss!” cried Jupiter. Mesmerized, he stared at the sonar monitor. “Five hundred metres below us is a broad ledge. But it’s far too deep for the sub!”

Whatever had attacked the sub was gone. But *Deep Quest* continued to sink. Through the viewing dome they saw the rock face gliding past them.

“A thousand five hundred metres!” Carol shouted. “Maximum depth! We have to do something!”

“We have to try to connect the water pumps now,” Professor Clark shouted. “We have to risk it!”

Jupiter turned on the interior lights. Then the professor went back to the battery compartment and changed some cables. Then he return to the front and hectically operated some switches. Nothing happened. He tried all the switches. “There must be a fuse blown! The pumps don’t get any power at all!”

“Do you have any ideas, Jupiter?” Carol looked at him scared.

The First Investigator looked around searching. He didn’t know what he was looking for. Maybe an idea, a brainwave. Suddenly he noticed how hungry he was—a completely unnecessary thought in this situation, but there was nothing he could do about it. “I don’t know!” he finally yelled, much louder than he actually wanted.

“One thousand six hundred metres!” Carol exclaimed.

“Is the creature still there?” Jupiter asked and looked at the screen himself. The dot was still circling nearby. Then it suddenly moved back towards *Deep Quest*.

“Lights out again!” shouted Professor Clark. “It’s following the light!”

Jupiter switched off the interior lights. Again only the screens and indicators were lit up. There was nothing outside but darkness.

“One thousand seven hundred metres!” Carol shouted.

Deep Quest groaned quietly. Suddenly there was a loud bang and they felt a sudden jerk.

Jupiter thought that was the end as he closed his eyes. But then he realized that the sub must have crashed onto a steep face. Nevertheless, he kept his eyes closed.

“One thousand and eight hundred metres!” Carol said as the groaning got louder. Metal creaked like a tree in a storm. Jupiter expected at any moment that the viewing dome would crack and the water would shoot into the sub and crush it.

At that moment, there was a deafening bang that made Jupiter flinch. He held his breath. But the pressure hull was still intact. Something else might have been crushed.

“One thousand nine hundred metres.” Carol’s voice had become a whisper that could hardly be heard with the groaning of the steel hull. Meanwhile, there were cracking sounds from every angle.

Jupiter shot through his mind that these were probably the last moments of his life. What would he think of? Aunt Mathilda and Uncle Titus? His friends? Strangely enough, only one thing crossed his mind—he was still hungry.

A second bang tore through the air and suddenly something clawed into Jupiter’s right hand. It was Carol’s hand. She squeezed so hard, he feared she’d break his fingers.

Deep Quest crashed loudly—but the outer hull still held together. Three seconds after the bang, it was quiet. There were cracking sound here and there. And the depth gauge had stopped at one thousand nine hundred and seventy seven metres. The submarine did not move or slip any further. Carol’s hand slowly disengaged from Jupiter’s.

“We are almost five hundred metres lower than we should be,” she whispered, as if fearing that the sound waves of her voice might destroy the submarine after all.

The First Investigator took a deep breath. Only now did he notice that he had held his breath for at least one minute. He was shaking. The trembling intensified. He was terribly hot.

“Good sub,” he said, lightly patting the instruments. “You’ve done very well.”

“We...” Professor Clark began hoarsely before he cleared his throat. “We should report to *Wavedancer*.”

Carol nodded in agreement. “They’re probably waiting for a big bubble to surface.”

Jupiter felt for the telephone in the dim light and switched it on. “We’re still here.” A deafening howl of joy came out of the telephone.

“No need for euphoria,” Jupiter continued dazed. “We are at one thousand nine hundred and seventy-seven metres. The pump didn’t work. And we were attacked. Something’s down here. Get us up. No matter how. But please hurry!”

Pete and Bob wandered up and down the deck. “The submarine could take it! Unbelievable!” Pete exclaimed again and again.

“Unfortunately, that doesn’t mean anything yet,” Bob remarked. “We only have eight hours left, and then they’ll have no air down there. We’ve got to get it up somehow. Even though Jupe can’t think of anything, we have to do something!”

"If only we could get in touch with somebody somehow!" Pete exclaimed. "Damn the professor! Why did he have to order Mr Evans to destroy the radio?"

"Maybe we can fix it after all," Bob thought. "This must work, a radio can't be that complicated!"

"Mr Evans already tried," Pete reminded him. "It's totally damaged."

"Can you think of anything better?" Bob came up. "I'll talk to Mr Evans again. Maybe he missed something. Where is he?"

"He just went below," Pete said.

Bob climbed down the steep stairs to the cabins. He was about to knock on Evans's door when he heard a voice.

Mr Evans was talking to someone. But everyone else was up on the deck or on the bridge? Bob frowned, then put his ear to the door and listened.

"It's not my fault, either. *Deep Quest* is down pretty deep! We're lucky it didn't implode! We'll just have to wait a little longer. If we can get to that thing..." A squawking voice answered. It sounded like it was coming from a radio!

Bob ripped the door open. Mr Evans was sitting at the table in front of a mobile radio. They stared at each other in horror. "What's that?" Bob shouted. "Where'd you get that radio?"

"There's trouble. Out," Mr Evans said into the microphone, then switched off the device. "This is a radio designed specifically for emergency calls," he explained. "I got it—"

"This is an emergency!" Bob shouted. "Did you get help?"

"I can't reach anyone. I..." Mr Evans stuttered.

"I don't believe a word you're saying," Bob growled. Suddenly he realized something. "You are the saboteur! You pushed Pete overboard and then saved him so he wouldn't suspect you. And you had a radio the whole time and you didn't get any help? What are you waiting for? That they die down there?" He turned around. "I'll get the captain right away!"

"I wouldn't do that if I were you."

Bob heard a click—a sound he had heard several times before. He stood rooted to the ground.

The click came from Mr Evans's gun.

Jupiter put his sweater on again after the sweat had penetrated all his pores when the sub crashed. Meanwhile he was rather cold. He took a look at the thermometer. "Ten degrees Celsius."

"It's going to get colder," Professor Clark remarked. "The water at this depth is only a few degrees above zero."

"So we'll either freeze to death or suffocate," Carol said. "Lovely. My station will be delighted. But maybe they can at least do a show about this tragic accident."

"I like your sense of humour," Jupiter remarked.

"Wait a few more hours and you'll get the joke," Carol said.

The First Investigator stared out the viewing dome, although there was nothing to see. Thanks to the sonar system, they knew they were on the broad ledge. The next abyss was about a hundred metres away, they shouldn't fall any deeper. But that didn't reassure him much.

"What do you think smashed into us?" Jupe thought out loud. "That long something looked like... like a neck."

“You saw the drawing of a Elasmosaurus,” said Professor Clark. “It has a very long neck.”

“Do you really think it was that?” Jupe asked.

Clark didn’t answer.

“And I didn’t film it,” Carol got angry. “Not that anyone would want to see this video, but it still annoys me.”

Jupiter shuddered. The submarine seemed to have shrunk. Maybe it was the darkness. At the moment he wished for nothing more than to go out into the sun.

But the sunlight was almost two thousand metres above him. His legs hurt so much from that cramped position. He would have liked to walk a little up and down, but then he would have become even more aware of the narrowness of *Deep Quest*.

Jupe chased the thought away. He wouldn’t want a claustrophobic attack now. He should rather think about whether there was a possibility to get the submarine up again. His thoughts were as tough as chewing gum. Besides that, he was still hungry.

Suddenly Jupiter said, “What is this?”

Carol whispered anxiously. “Look at that!” She pointed to the sonar monitor.

Two points lit up. They were slowly moving towards *Deep Quest*.

“Two?” gasped the professor. “There are two of them now! Turn on the headlights!”

“But it would only attract them!” Jupiter exclaimed, frightened.

“Exactly!” Professor Clark shouted excitedly. “Otherwise they’ll swim past us!”

“But what if we get attacked again!” Carol cried. “The submarine can’t hold on much anymore.”

“I want to see them!” The professor’s eyes were glowing. “And if they’re the last thing I see!”

“They’re getting closer,” Jupiter said. “But it’s pitch black out there. Even if they were right in front of the screen, we wouldn’t know anything.” Questioningly, he looked at Carol.

“All right,” she sighed. “It can’t get any worse than this. But if one of the creatures attacks us, we’ll turn the lights off! Hold on, I’ll get my camera ready. With low-light sensors, nothing escapes me this time.”

When Carol was ready, the professor turned the headlights on. The bright light dazzled them for a moment. Then they saw the bare underwater landscape in front of them. The light reached only about forty metres and then got lost in the unfathomable blackness.

“They’re not close enough yet,” Jupiter whispered, looking at the sonar monitor. “But they’ve changed course and are approaching us! We must see them now!”

The seconds passed excruciatingly slowly. Suddenly a huge shadow peeled out of the darkness and dived into the cone of light made by the headlights.

17. The Architeuthis

“Where’s Bob?” Dr Helprin asked when he left the bridge with Captain Jason and came up to Pete.

“I don’t know. Below the deck, I think,” Pete replied. “Any idea of a response from Ocean Obs?” The Second Investigator stood at the railing and stared at the horizon hoping to spot a ship somewhere.

“No. We have no radio contact so we have no way of knowing whether Ocean Obs has acted on the transmitter signals,” Captain Jason said. “We cannot just depend on them as *Deep Quest* needs urgent attention. Therefore we have to send out distress signals periodically using whatever flares that we have left. Maybe a nearby ship will see us. It’s the only chance we have.”

“You won’t do that, Captain!” shouted Mr Evans, who had suddenly appeared at the stern of the ship, about fifteen metres away. Bob was standing in front of him in an unusually crooked posture. His face was strangely distorted. Pete wondered what was wrong with him. Only then did he see that Evans had turned Bob’s arm on his back and threatened him with a gun.

“Captain!” called Pete. “He’s got a gun!”

“Take it easy,” said Mr Evans. “You should all stay calm.” It was crazy. Almost the same scene had taken place twenty-four hours ago—only with Professor Clark in the lead—but he didn’t have a hostage then.

“What are you talking about, Evans?” Captain Jason barked.

“He’s got a radio!” Bob provided the explanation.

“What?” The captain exclaimed.

“He sabotaged the submarine, Pete saw him do it,” Bob cried.

Captain Jason and Dr Helprin didn’t understand anything anymore. Without Evans preventing him, the Second Investigator explained to them in a few words what had happened the other night. “What are you up to?” Pete asked. “Do you want to kill Professor Clark and the others?”

“That wasn’t really my intention.”

“Then what?” Pete shouted.

“I wanted the submarine. Nothing more.”

“The submarine? But why?” Dr Helprin asked with anger.

“Because a submarine like that brings a nice wad of money,” Evans explained.

“Assuming you know the right people to buy it.”

“You’re risking three lives to sell a submarine?” Dr Helprin asked, stunned.

“That was an accident,” Evans confessed.

“An accident? You sabotaged *Deep Quest*, didn’t you?” Pete shouted indignantly. “I saw you do it!”

“I didn’t sabotage the sub,” Evans said.

“Oh, no? And why is that thing stuck down there now?” Pete shouted back.

“Because that idiot Clark went full speed ahead!” Evans replied grimly. “Otherwise everything would have gone well. I would have waited until the submarine was unguarded

and disappeared with it.”

“Disappeared?” Dr Helprin laughed scornfully. “Where to? To Lebrato Island?”

“To the mainland. Where my client is waiting.”

“Don’t be ridiculous, Evans. The mainland’s six hundred miles away! *Deep Quest* could never have made it. The batteries would have been flat by then. Now release Bob!”

Evans held Bob steady. “The old batteries would not have lasted, but I’ve built in better ones. The new batteries would have had enough power to steer it to the coast.”

“That must have gone wrong, Mr Evans,” Pete noted angrily. “Your new batteries blew up in their faces down there! If they die, it’s your fault! Now get some help with your radio!”

“So a ship can show up here right away and I can get arrested? Never!” he shouted grimly.

“A ship will show up soon anyway,” Captain Jason replied confidently. “Ocean Obs guaranteed to send help.”

Mr Evans laughed. “Ocean Obs knows nothing! I’ve been talking to Ocean Obs radio contact and assure them everything’s all right—regularly, by the book. Just as I told the ship that came by yesterday that the flare gun shot was an accident.”

“Then no one will come to save the three of them down there!” Pete shouted.

“You’re very right, boy,” Mr Evans said.

“Put the gun down and let go of Bob!” Captain Jason said firmly. “You don’t stand a chance! You can’t escape from this ship, can you? And sooner or later help will come, with or without your radio.”

“But it’ll be too late for your friends,” Mr Evans countered.

Captain Jason walked slowly toward Mr Evans and Bob. “You lost, Evans, you have to admit that. There’s no place you can escape to. If you work with us now and help us save *Deep Quest*, your punishment may be reduced.”

“I’m going to get *Deep Quest*,” Mr Evans was convinced. “If necessary, with three bodies on board. Now stop, Captain, or I’ll shoot!” Evans’s voice sounded shrill. He took a few steps back and took Bob with him.

“You’re not going to do this! You’re just making your situation worse. And you know it.” The captain kept walking towards Evans.

“I mean it, Captain! One more step and I’ll pull the trigger!” Evans held up his gun and then... a shot ripped through the air!

A second one joined the huge shadow approaching out of the darkness. They were incredibly long and narrow and shot towards them like giant arrows. Two pairs of plate-sized eyes stared at them. Then the creatures suddenly unfolded and Jupiter realized what they were. “Octopuses! Giant octopuses!”

“No, Jupiter,” Professor Clark whispered respectfully at the sight of the gigantic animals. “They are squids. Look, they have ten arms, not eight! Two of their arms, which are longer than the other eight, are the tentacles.”

Now the creatures inflated to their full size and stretched out all their arms. As thick as a human thigh, they protruded from the arrow-shaped head and were fitted with huge suckers on the underside. The front animal was so big that the arms disappeared in the darkness behind the headlights. Two of the monstrous tentacles suddenly shot at them.

“It’s... it’s attacking us!” Carol shouted.

“Lights out!” Professor Clark screamed.

Carol operated the switches and all the lights were off. They waited anxiously for the impact. But it stayed away.

"It's confused," whispered Professor Clark. "The light has attracted it. Now it doesn't know where we are."

"My goodness! They were the largest animals I've ever seen!" Jupiter shuddered. "The huge head! It was almost twice as long as *Deep Quest*! And the arms... immeasurable!"

Professor Clark looked at the sonar monitor. "They're still around—right in front of us. No one has ever seen these giants alive before."

"What appeared before us earlier was not the neck of a plesiosaur, but the arm of an octopus... excuse me, squid," Carol whispered.

"And probably exactly what the Maya peoples saw a thousand years ago," Jupiter said. "What are these creatures, Professor?"

"Squids are squids," the professor explained. "They live all over the world. They're usually much smaller. The giant squid, or *Architeuthis*, was considered a legend for centuries—until indirect evidence of its existence was found. Remember the story I told you about the sperm whales, Jupiter?"

"The whales whose skin was found with sucker scars that were huge?" Jupiter recalled.

"Yes. In the 1930s, a dead squid was found on the coast of Newfoundland, more than twenty metres long," the professor continued. "So we've known they existed for a long time. But one also knows that they live in the deep sea, where only rarely a human ventures to. It's cold down there and dark. They love the dark. That's why they only come to the surface at night to hunt. There's not much they can eat down here."

"That's why it attacked us," Carol suspected. "It was afraid of the light."

"Or it thought we were a rival. Some squids have..." The professor fell silent. "Look!"

The darkness had given way to a faint glimmer of light. Blue dots lit up in front of the viewing dome.

Jupiter couldn't believe his eyes. "What's that?"

"The squid," the professor breathed with emotion. "That's what I was about to say. Some species have light organs similar to those of fireflies—only much bigger and more numerous."

Suddenly, dark red dots appeared. They danced around with the movement of the squids. It actually looked like a huge swarm of colourful fireflies. Carol recorded everything on video.

Gradually, more and more dots began to glow until the shape of the squid slowly peeled out. Its skin began to glow darkly.

"They're so huge!" Jupiter still couldn't believe it. "The arms are easily longer than twenty metres!" Now the huge eyes of the squids, which was at the side of its elongated head, shone.

"The eyes of *Architeuthis* are the largest in the entire animal kingdom," explained Professor Clark as he stared spellbound at the ever-expanding sea of lights in front of them. "Squid eyes of forty centimetres in diameter have been found in the stomachs of sperm whales."

But these were only numbers that could not withstand the comparison with reality. Jupiter were totally fascinated observing the giants of the deep sea. They orbited each other. Sometimes they put all ten arms close together and glided like long torpedoes away from *Deep Quest*. Then they spread out the tentacles again and illuminated the eternal darkness that reigned down here. They carefully touched each other, formed colourfully glowing spirals with their tentacles and moved closer together.

“What are they doing?” Carol whispered.

“I don’t know. No one’s ever seen this before,” the professor remarked. “But it looks like some sort of a dance to me. Record this, Miss Ford! Record it! This is an incredible discovery!”

“My camera won’t miss a second,” Carol assured him.

The dance of the giant squids lasted a long time. Jupiter forgot about the cold. He even forgot where he was and that the air in the submarine became scarcer and scarcer. He was spellbound and watched the glowing spectacle. The animals kept changing colours. Sometimes the light organs at their tentacle ends flashed brightly, then shimmering waves ran over their bodies. It was the most incredible thing he had ever seen.

And it might also be the last thing he’d ever see.

18. The Rescue Mission

Pete shouted involuntarily: “Bob!” But then he realized that Evans’s gun had fallen out of his hand. And it didn’t seem that Evans had pulled the trigger.

Captain Jason rushed towards them. But even before he reached, Bob pulled out of the grip and elbowed Mr Evans hard in his stomach. As Evans fell to the ground, both Bob and Captain Jason threw themselves at him.

Evans only fought back briefly before realizing he had no chance and surrendered.

“Ha! Nice shot, huh?” Enrique shouted from the bridge. Then he blew over the mouth of a gun like a Western hero. Only then the rest realized that Enrique had shot the gun out of Evans’s hand. “I’ve always been good at target shooting! Wasn’t a shooting champion for nothing! Luckily, Professor Clark left his gun on the bridge.”

“Great, Enrique!” Pete shouted, then he ran towards Mr Evans lying on the ground. “I wouldn’t mind pushing you into the sea,” he said grimly. “Let’s see if you can swim as well as I can.”

“Watch this guy, boys,” said Captain Jason. “I’m going to get help with his radio now!”

“Yes, Captain. He won’t get away from us,” Bob assured him. With Dr Helprin’s help, they tied up Mr Evans, who stared at them in silence.

After Captain Jason contacted Ocean Obs, he, Bob and Pete ran up the stairs to the bridge. Pete was the first to get to the underwater telephone. The crew of the submarine had switched their equipment on again in the meantime.

“*Wavedancer* to *Deep Quest*, we have good news. A miracle has happened, so to speak!”

“Down here too,” Jupiter’s voice came out of the telephone.

“What do you mean by that? Can you make it up by yourself?” Pete asked.

“Not that,” Jupiter replied. “It’s a miracle of a completely different kind.”

“Tell us later,” Pete said. “I’ll pass you over to Captain Jason.”

“We’ve reached Ocean Obs!” the captain said on the telephone. “They talked to some important people in Costa Rica. In three hours, a helicopter will be here, bringing a long nylon cable to pull you up.”

“That’s really good news, Captain!” Jupiter shouted with relief. “But how’s that gonna work?”

“We let down the rope with a weight to you, you grab it with the robotic arm and the winch on *Wavedancer* will pull you up. In four hours you will see the light of the sun again.”

For a while there was silence in the sub. “We had a light down here, too,” Jupe remarked. “And it’s much more beautiful than that of the sun.”

The helicopter came and brought along a two kilometre long, thin, but very tear-resistant nylon rope on a huge reel. They attached a weight to the end and lowered it. It took a while for *Wavedancer* to manoeuvre the rope to the right position.

On *Deep Quest*, the three finally saw the weight and the cable. The professor controlled two robotic arms to grab hold of the cable securely. The winch on *Wavedancer* then very gently pulled the submarine upwards. Since it was not very difficult in the water, there was no danger of the rope breaking. The trip up took about an hour.

When Jupiter opened the hatch and saw daylight for the first time in hours and felt warmth on his skin, the sun had long since passed the zenith and was already leaning towards the horizon. The First Investigator was the first to come back up on the ship. He was glad to feel the ship floor under his feet again. Relieved, he fell into the arms of his friends.

“Welcome aboard!” Captain Jason cried with delight as he helped Carol and Professor Clark on deck.

Bob and Pete reported excitedly about what had happened on board *Wavedancer*. “Evans just wanted to run off with the submarine. He intended to wait for a dive to test the batteries he had installed without endangering himself. And then he planned to hijack the sub and go unnoticed under water to the next coast, where his client would receive *Deep Quest* and paid him a lot of money for it. A submarine like that is worth a few hundred thousand dollars. The police will probably try to catch that guy.”

“Why didn’t we figure out that Evans was behind the whole thing?” Pete was annoyed.

Jupe grinned. “When I raised the suspicion a few days ago, you said it was complete nonsense.”

“Well...” the Second Investigator started, embarrassed. “In fact, all he had to do was to give me some excuse when I caught him meddling at the submarine. But he had already made himself so suspicious that he had no choice but to push me into the ocean and then turned around to save me. This was probably his idea to get himself out of the suspect list.”

“But now tell us!” Bob interrupted the Second Investigator impatiently. “What exactly happened down there? What were those things that attacked you?”

Jupiter looked at Carol and Professor Clark. They smiled and nodded encouragingly at him. Then the First Investigator began to tell the incredible story in great detail.

Four days later, The Three Investigators, Carol, Dr Helprin and Professor Clark stood at the railing of *Wavedancer* and looked towards the towering skyscrapers of Los Angeles. A few minutes ago the coast had appeared on the horizon.

After their adventure near Lebrato Island, the ship was immediately reversed. The expedition to the hydrothermal vents had to be postponed because *Deep Quest* was no longer operational without a thorough overhaul. Nevertheless, the journey had become a success. The crew had highly interesting results to deliver to Ocean Obs.

On the journey back, again and again they had told each other about their adventures over and under water, until at the end all crew members knew every detail by heart—all except Mr Evans, whose first punishment was not only a provisional prison in one of the cabins, but also that of complete disregard until he could be handed over to the police in the port of Los Angeles.

“I would have loved to have seen the giant squid myself,” Pete sighed. He had said this sentence countless times in the last four days.

“You’ll see them,” Carol promised. “As soon as the footages are compiled and edited.”

“I can’t stress enough how glad I am that you were there, Miss Ford,” Professor Clark said. “Your footage is of the greatest scientific value. You’re a miracle.”

“I’m dying to see the video, too.” Everyone turned around in amazement. Dr Helprin had been extremely cautious in the last few days and had hardly commented on the discovery that *Deep Quest* had made.

“So you actually think that the mission wasn’t a complete waste now?” Jupiter asked.

“Yes,” he confessed. Then he turned to Professor Clark. “But I still don’t know what to think of you. You made a fantastic discovery—more by chance than by knowledge, but it is

and remains a fantastic discovery. Nevertheless, it seems to me that you still would not let go of this absurd plesiosaur idea.”

Professor Clark smiled. “You’ve got me all figured out. I still believe the plesiosaur exists. And I hope to have convinced you and all the other doubters at Ocean Obs that there are things in the depths of the ocean that we have no idea about.”

Now Dr Helprin smiled, too. “I admit defeat—at least in part. Yes, there are things down there we don’t know yet. The ocean hasn’t revealed all its secrets, but I still believe that creatures that have been extinct for sixty-five million years are definitely not among them.”

“What are you going to do now, Professor Clark?” Jupiter asked.

“I will make a new proposal to Ocean Obs. All legal. And this time they should approve an expedition for me. And then I will find the plesiosaur.”

Bob grinned. “Or something completely different!”